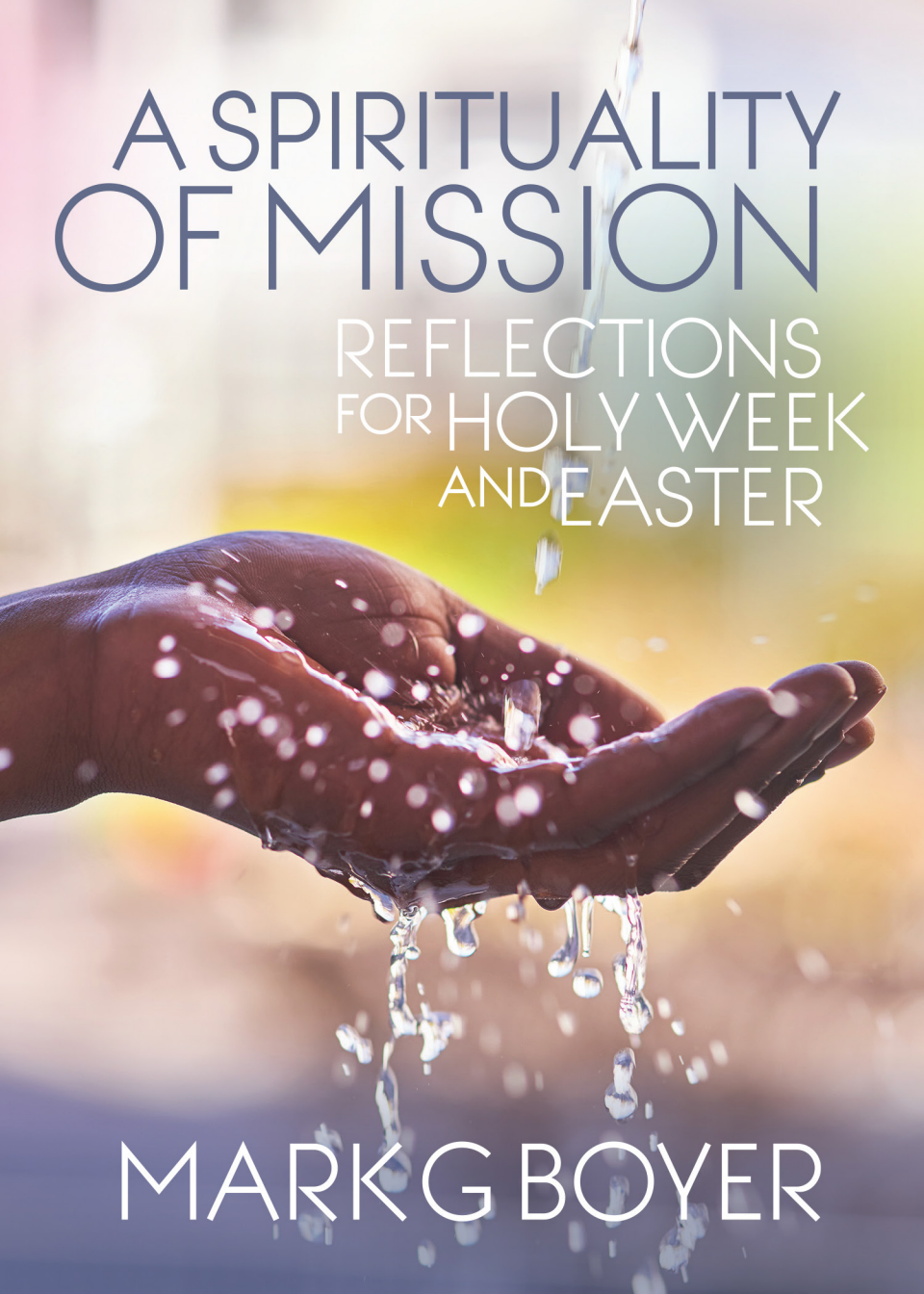
A SPIRITUALITY OF MISSION

REFLECTIONS FOR HOLY WEEK AND EASTER



MARK G BOYER

VISIT…

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A Spirituality of Mission

Reflections for Holy Week and Easter

Mark G. Boyer

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Dedicated to
Sister Doctor Pauline Nugent, CCVI,
scholar, teacher, and friend,
celebrating sixty years as a
Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word

We declare to you what was from the beginning,
what we have heard,
what we have seen with our eyes,
what we have looked at and touched with our hands,
concerning the word of life—
this life was revealed,
and we have seen it and testify to it,
and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father
and was revealed to us—
we declare to you what we have seen and heard
so that you also may have fellowship with us;
and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.
We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

—1 John 1:1-4

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Introduction

In some churches today, the buzz word is evangelization or new evangelization. The word "evangelization" means "to proclaim the gospel," more specifically "to proclaim the good news" of Jesus Christ. When the adjective "new" is placed in front of the word "evangelization," as in "new evangelization," the meaning is "to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to those who have already heard it but are not living it." In other words, there are a lot of people who lay claim to the name "Christian" without knowing anything about this lifestyle. Those who understand the gospel are called and sent to proclaim it in word and through the way they live their lives.

Throughout the past fifty years, various popes have written letters and exhortations and spoken often about evangelization. Many churches have crafted mission statements for their congregations that include a few words about evangelization, even if the word itself is not used. Catechetical programs emphasize how important evangelization is in the home, the neighborhood, and the workplace. Christian history is filled with those men and women who died while evangelizing to other peoples throughout the world.

I do not use the word "evangelization" often in this book. I prefer the word "mission," from the Latin verb *missio*, meaning "to send." Christians, who have heard the gospel, accepted it, and been formed in it, are sent to others with the same

basic message. In order to keep the proclamation of the gospel from becoming just another wordy event, I prefer to call this a spirituality of mission. The gospel has to take root and grow in the life of a person before he or she can bear the fruit of evangelization. The gospel has to take root and grow in a person before he or she can either proclaim it authentically or live it incarnately. In other words, mission has to become a lifestyle, a way one lives every minute of existence.

Title of the Book

The word "spirituality" is best understood as ongoing transformation. We are changed by letting go of our ego, our attachments to ourselves, houses, cars, others. While we live in a culture that abhors change, authentic spirituality is a process of constant change, of constantly being reshaped by the creating hand of God. For that to happen, ego has to go. In order not to fool ourselves into thinking that we have finished the process, we embrace spiritual practices (reading Scripture, meditation, journaling, etc.) that assist us in transformation. At first the practices may be difficult or even annoying, but they will reshape or transform us gradually. One day we wake up and notice how much we have been changed.

This book is titled *A Spirituality of Mission*. This means that the purpose of the book is to transform the reader into a missionary or evangelizer. It is designed to be a type of workbook for determining one's spirituality of mission and implementing the change in thought that leads to the change in behavior. In other words, this book is meant to be an agent of gradual transformation. The twelve chapters are not to be considered stages or steps that a person can take in order to be transformed. A spirituality of mission is not a goal to be

achieved. The chapters are aspects that should be included in a spirituality of mission. They invite the reader to examine each aspect in order to understand it and to plumb the depth of its truth. Therefore, each person will put together the aspects of a spirituality of mission in a way unique to him or her. However, the one common trait that will pervade everyone's spirituality of mission is the Christian lifestyle. Others can tell by the way we live if mission has permeated behavior.

The book is supported by a spirituality of sacred numbers. For example, there are twelve chapters. Twelve is a sacred number, designating both the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of Jesus, not to mention the 144,000 (12 x 12 x 1000) in the book of Revelation! In each chapter, we find five entries. There are five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus gives five major discourses or sermons. Biblical numbers do not often indicate a quantity; often they indicate a quality of the divine that is to be absorbed by the reader. The sacred number seven (composed of the number for the divine [three] and the number for the earth [four]) added to the sacred number five equals the sacred number twelve. Spiritually, these numbers are about God's union with people through Jesus and the mission that Jesus has entrusted to those who follow him.

Subtitle of the Book

The subtitle of this work is *Reflections for Holy Week and Easter*. To reflect means to redirect. Thus, a reflection is the process or act of reflecting something. When we speak of reflections based on the Bible, we understand the reflecting to take place in two ways. First, God's word is reflecting something of God to us.

Second, once we hear and understand the word, we reflect it to others. The sixty reflections in this book attempt to clarify God's reflections as recorded by the writers of the Christian Bible (New Testament), and they also attempt to reflect to us a way of applying God's word to our lives.

The reflections contained herein are designed to be used during Holy Week and the Easter season. The last days of Lent during Holy Week lead directly to the Sacred Paschal Triduum and the beginning of the celebration of the Lord's resurrection. While not exclusive to Holy Week and Easter, this liturgical time in particular contains a missionary aspect to itself. During Holy Week, as we celebrate the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem to complete his work, his Last Supper with his disciples, and his death on the cross, we recognize that we are sent, missioned, to reconcile just like Jesus did. During Easter our announcement is that God raised the crucified One from the dead—that is the good news that every missioner bears to others and lives daily.

Using the Book

This book can be used primarily during Holy Week and the Easter season, that is, from Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord through the Easter season to the Wednesday after Pentecost. While the reader may pick any two months to use the book (such as Lent–Easter or Advent–Christmas), I have listed the days of Holy Week and Easter next to the section titles of each chapter to make it convenient for the reader.

This book would make a great gift for those preparing for baptism during the Easter Vigil or those making a profession of faith during the Easter Vigil or at some other time. In other words, the material contained herein takes the period of post-

baptismal catechesis or mystagogy seriously with its focus on mission. The newly baptized and the newly professed members of the church with the help of their godparents and sponsors enter into closer ties with the rest of the faithful by reflecting on their mission. The faithful, by reflecting on their mission, experience a renewal of mission and a further deepening of the spirituality accompanying it. At the very least, the godparent or sponsor can use this book on a weekly basis with the newly baptized or newly professed for whom he or she served as a godparent or sponsor. Furthermore, small groups of people may choose to read a chapter of the book and discuss their responses to what they encountered here.

While the book does not tie in the daily Scripture texts from the Lectionary, those who read the daily texts will find it profitable to read them in connection with the exercises provided in this book. The assigned daily Scripture texts will further enhance the contents of each reflection. New spiritual insights will be gained from this process, and those ideas should be recorded in one's journal.

Four-Part Exercise

This book consists of sixty exercises that are each a fifteen-minute spirituality of mission. Any process takes time; the process of crafting a spirituality of mission is a graceful sweep from one stage of life to another. Each of the twelve chapters in this book offers reflections organized into four parts that will provide readers with about a fifteen-minute exercise on aspects of a spirituality of mission.

The first part of each exercise is a short quotation from the Christian Bible. It focuses on one aspect of the topic of the chapter. The reflection, part two, explores the metaphor

or idea found in the Scripture passage for its meanings and makes some applications for today. In the journal section, part three, readers make connections between the biblical quotation, the reflection, and their own lives. Those connections may be written down or meditated on with the help of the questions. In order to prepare for the appendix, which leads readers in a process of gathering their deepest insights into their spirituality of mission, I recommend that readers record their thoughts in a journal (written or electronic). Once they are finished, the exercise is concluded with a short prayer.

The appendix of the book is designed to help readers synthesize their written responses to the meditation/journal questions. The end product of the appendix should be the individual reader's spirituality of mission.

The four-part process is designed to surface a spirituality of mission, a way of preparing the self to be transformed. Spirituality, as a way of life, transfigures the person step-by-step as he or she gets closer and closer to God. After meeting the Divine, the individual better understands some of the circumstances of one's life, including one's unique self. Spirituality is the way that one is in the Divine's presence, which emerges through human experiences of being on mission and guided reflection upon those experiences.

Never can one imagine fully being the person one was created to be. However, through the process of call, listening and believing, leaving all, being commissioned, being sent, being free from worry, having a purpose, harvesting, fearlessly evangelizing, witnessing, paying the cost of discipleship, and calling others, a person comes closer to human fulfillment and may erupt in joy at having reached a spirituality of mission.

Called

Immediately

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

SCRIPTURE: "As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him" (Mark 1:16-20).

REFLECTION: When Jesus calls his first disciples, they immediately respond. Simon and Andrew immediately leave their nets and follow him. James and John immediately leave their father and the hired men and follow him. There is no delay; there is no time to think about the call. It comes through the words of Jesus as he passes by. The fishermen hear it and respond to it immediately.

Such immediacy challenges the fishermen's comfort. They are comfortable being fishermen. They are comfortable fishing. They are comfortable mending their nets. They are comfortable being with their father. Jesus, however, disturbs their comfort by seeking an immediate response to his invitation to fish for people. Not even knowing what fishing for people might mean, four men relinquish their comfort and follow Jesus immediately.

God calls, or Jesus calls on behalf of God, or another person is the vehicle for God's call. An urge is felt to volunteer in a

soup kitchen—that's a call. In a writer's mind a new idea for a book begins to take shape—that's a call. A family member suggests a project for Lent or Advent, and all agree to the endeavor—that's a call. For some unarticulated reason comfort is abandoned immediately in order to answer the call. A spirituality of mission includes an immediate response when one recognizes a divine call.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: When have you recently received a divine call? What comfort did you immediately abandon in order to answer the call?

PRAYER: Almighty God, you call me to follow your Son, and to fish for people. Help me abandon all that is comfortable to me, so that I may respond immediately to you who live and reign with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

Brothers

Monday of Holy Week

SCRIPTURE: "As [Jesus] walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.' Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him" (Matt 4:18-22).

REFLECTION: The above passage from Matthew's gospel looks familiar because the author of Matthew's gospel used Mark's gospel as a source for his own work. However, while the two passages are similar, they are also different. Mark emphasizes the immediacy of the first disciples' response to Jesus' call. Matthew keeps that emphasis, but embellishes the account with a focus on the two pairs of brothers. Simon, called Peter, and Andrew are brothers. James and John, sons of Zebedee, are brothers. Thus, Jesus calls brothers; he calls men who already know each other and can support each other in fishing for people.

One does not answer a divine call alone. Such individualism is foreign to most biblical narratives. When God calls Abraham, he doesn't call him alone. God also calls his wife, Sarah, their servants, and others to leave their homeland and travel to a new land. When God calls Moses, he doesn't call

him alone. God also calls his brother, Aaron, and their sister, Miriam. God's call of Samuel is not for Samuel alone; Eli is present to help the boy understand the call.

Jesus calls brothers to join him in his mission in Galilee and beyond. They will support each other in their work of evangelization. In other words, one does not fish for people alone. That is why all the members of a family often belong to the same church and travel together on a mission trip. Adult siblings solicit each other's material, spiritual, and financial support for supplying a soup kitchen, volunteering in a homeless shelter, or participating in a building project. While a person may participate in some type of home visitation—like meals on wheels, hospice, taking the elderly to doctor's appointments, etc.—serving others with a partner enables the two people to support each other in their mission.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: In what type of mission do you have a partner? How does he or she support you? How do you support him or her?

PRAYER: Your Son called the brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John, to fish for others, Almighty God. Grant me the support of a fellow disciple in the work you have given me to do. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Amazing Catch

Tuesday of Holy Week

SCRIPTURE: "[Jesus] got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' . . . When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. . . . [A]ll who were with [Simon] were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people' " (Luke 5:3-4, 6, 9-10).

REFLECTION: The author of Luke's gospel takes the two separate stories of Jesus calling Simon and Andrew and James and John and combines them with an account of a miraculous catch of fish, which appears as a post-resurrection story in the epilogue to John's gospel (21:1-14). Luke's streamlined version of the account not only makes the sons of Zebedee fishing partners with Simon (omitting the mention of Andrew), but also changes the focus of the stories. Mark's gospel is focused on the immediacy of the response. Matthew's gospel is focused on the companionship that supports the evangelization effort. Luke's gospel prefers the amazement of all when Simon Peter fills two boats with fish and declares his sinfulness before Jesus, who, after removing his fear, tells him that he will be catching people. In other words, the focus is on the catch.

A person on mission has but one focus—the catch. However, the story is not about the catch made by Simon Peter; he is but the instrument for the catch. The story is about being a vehicle for the catch, letting God work through one in order to catch people. Then, a person realizes that he or she is not worthy of such use, of such a call. Simon recognizes his sinful state, and Jesus tells him that God can work miracles through him despite his unworthiness.

What was true for Peter, James, and John is also true for people today. The call to mission includes amazement at what God does through sinful or unworthy apostles. Not cutting off another driver in traffic may be the opportunity for God to work through a person. Visiting a friend in the hospital and praying with him or her may be the way God catches that one. Teachers are always catching students—hopefully studying—and who can say that God is not fishing for young lives through those who educate them? If one feels amazed, he or she can be assured that people have been caught by God. All one can do is keep following Jesus.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: How have you been an instrument for God to catch people?

PRAYER: Lord, I am a sinful person, unworthy of the call you have entrusted to me. As I kneel in prayer before you, I trust that you will guide my boat and my net to those you have chosen to catch. Grant this through your Son, Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Tax Collector

Wednesday of Holy Week

SCRIPTURE: "Jesus went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him" (Mark 2:13-14).

REFLECTION: Besides the call narratives of Peter and Andrew and James and John, there is the call of Levi, a very short story about a tax collector invited to follow Jesus. The author of Matthew's gospel alters the story he found in Mark's gospel by omitting the detail of Jesus walking by the sea, changing the name of the tax collector from Levi to Matthew, and omitting his father's name. The author of Luke's gospel also omits the detail of Jesus walking by the sea, keeps his name as Levi, and adds that he left everything to follow Jesus.

Besides being a very short call story, the amazing note about the call of Levi (Matthew) is that he is a tax collector. At the time of Jesus, a tax collector was a Jew who worked for the Roman occupation forces in Palestine. The Romans didn't care how the tax collector gathered the amount he had agreed to pay the occupiers, nor did they concern themselves with how much he gathered. The way the tax collector made his living was by raising the amount of the tax set by the Romans and pocketing the difference. There was nothing to keep a tax collector from making a lot of money off of his fellow Jews. Thus, from a Jewish perspective, a tax collector was a much despised man.

However, Jesus calls Levi (Matthew) to follow him, and a tax collector joins Jesus' group of disciples. Jesus' call of Levi (Matthew) illustrates a theme that runs through the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament): God's choice is not always a human choice. God chose Moses, a murderer, but humans would not have picked him. God chose David, a shepherd boy, but not even his father, Jesse, would have chosen him. No one is worthy of God's call, but that doesn't keep God or Jesus from calling.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: In what ways are you like Levi (Matthew), unworthy of God's call?

PRAYER: You look into the heart, almighty God, whereas I see only with my eyes. Give me the ability to see what you see in that tax collector who follows your Son, Jesus Christ. He lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Called by Lot

Holy Thursday

SCRIPTURE: Peter said to the believers, " '[O]ne of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.' So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed . . . And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:21-24, 26).

REFLECTION: The Acts of the Apostles is the companion volume to Luke's gospel. In other words, Luke's gospel is the first volume of a two-volume work, and the Acts of the Apostles is volume two. One characteristic displayed in both books is that whatever Jesus did in the gospel, the apostles, especially Peter and Paul, do in the Acts. Jesus called twelve apostles in Luke's gospel; the apostles called Matthias in the Acts to replace Judas, who, according to the Acts, fell headlong into a field and "burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out."

Matthias is chosen by casting lots. The name, or initial, of each candidate is written on a stone and put in a jar. The jar is shaken until one stone falls out. This procedure is called divining, determining the will of God. While it may seem strange to people today—we would want to see a resume and conduct an interview—it was a normal practice by ancient people. Once Matthias is called, the Jewish Pentecost occurs, and Matthias is never heard of again in the Acts of the Apostles.

His sole function is to fill the twelfth position—vacated by Judas—in the company of apostles.

Sometimes that is all that is needed for mission. A position needs to be filled, and someone is chosen to take the place. A volunteer is needed to answer the parish telephone for two hours, and one person asks another to fill the open spot. A small group of elderly people needs to fill a spot left open by a member's death, and one invites another to join the study group. A group of highway trash collectors calls a friend to join them in their cleanup efforts, and a position is filled. All calls do not have to be glorious or fascinating. Some occur by lot; some because one makes a telephone call.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: Whom do you know answered the call to be one among others like Matthias did?

PRAYER: Lord, you know everyone's heart. When I need to call others, show me whom you have chosen to serve you. I ask this in the name of Jesus, my Lord. Amen.

Listen and Believe

Hear!

Good Friday

Scripture: Jesus said to "those who were around him along with the twelve . . . , 'And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold' " (Mark 4:10, 20).

Reflection: Once a person is called, he or she must hear the word of God. As the Markan Jesus puts it, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" (4:9). After telling the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1-9), Jesus interprets it, explaining that the sower "sows the word" (Mark 4:14), and those who hear the word produce amazingly. In fact, the kingdom of God grows day-by-day in the lives of those who hear, according to the Markan Jesus.

There is an aspect of trust that is involved in hearing. Just like no one knows how seed scattered on the ground begins to sprout, then grows into a stalk, then produces full grain, so, too, no one knows exactly how hearing the word of God produces the fruit of the kingdom. All this is God's doing, and God is worthy of trust. It may not be in the hearer's time that the harvest is ripe and ready, but it will be in God's time.

Impatience keeps people from hearing and trusting God. The instantaneous culture in which most people live cannot wait for the harvest. People want results now. A profit has to be made now. One must be gratified with popcorn and soda now. The traffic needs to move now. All this instant gratification breeds impatience and the inability to wait, like a seed waits in the soil. Once a person hears the word of God, he or she must wait patiently as his or her trust grows, gradually

sprouting, then producing the fruit that God wants for the harvest. A spirituality of mission begins with a call, but it is quickly followed by intense hearing and trusting.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What word of God have you heard recently? What trust did you place in that word? In time, what did that word produce in you?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, eternal word of God, help me to listen to God's word and to grow in the grace of God's good soil so that I may bear the fruit of God's kingdom, where you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Zechariah and Mary

Holy Saturday

SCRIPTURE: The angel said to Zechariah, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. . . . Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John" (Luke 1:19, 13).

REFLECTION: The author of Luke's gospel likes to narrate a story about a man and balance it with a story about a woman. He begins this literary technique with the twin appearances of the angel Gabriel to a man named Zechariah and, six months later, to a woman named Mary. Zechariah hears the word of God as Gabriel delivers it to him, but he does not believe that he and his aged wife, Elizabeth, can conceive a child. So, because he did not believe Gabriel's words—God's words—he became mute (Luke 1:20). Zechariah is contrasted with Mary, who hears Gabriel's words—God's words—about the Holy Spirit coming upon her and the power of the Most High overshadowing her and her conceiving the Son of God in her virginal womb and declares, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

Gabriel, whose name means "God's strength," brings the power of God's word to Zechariah and Mary. Zechariah hears, but does not believe; Mary hears, and believes. Even Zechariah's lack of trust does not frustrate God's word. Nine months after Gabriel's appearance to Zechariah, Elizabeth gives birth to John the Baptist, and Zechariah's speech is restored. Nine months

after Gabriel's appearance to Mary, the Virgin gives birth to Jesus, the Son of the Most High.

Hearing the word of God and trusting the messenger who delivers it is one aspect of a spirituality of mission. The word of God has a mission; it needs human cooperation—in some way—to fulfill its purpose. The prophet Isaiah narrates God declaring, "[M]y word . . . that goes out from my mouth . . . shall not return to me empty, / but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, / and succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (55:11). Such is the case with Zechariah and Mary.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What word of God have you heard and trusted? What was its purpose?

PRAYER: Lord, as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, so is the word that goes out from your mouth. Grant me the ability to hear and trust your word that it may accomplish its purpose. I ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son and Word, who lives with you forever and ever. Amen.

Speaking Words of God

Easter Sunday

SCRIPTURE: "The one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, yet no one accepts his testimony. Whoever has accepted his testimony has certified this, that God is true. He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure" (John 3:31c-34).

REFLECTION: Several times in John's gospel the narrator of the events gets carried away and inserts his own reflections on an event. After narrating the account about Jesus and John baptizing and John declaring Jesus to be greater than John, the writer records a reflection about the one—Jesus—who comes from the world above (where God lives) to the earth (where people live) to testify to what he has seen above and to speak the words of God to people. The narrator's words (John 3:31-36) reveal a fundamental presupposition of the author, namely, that Jesus bears the words of God from heaven to earth in order to enable those on earth to enter eternal life in heaven.

Later in John's gospel, Jesus emphasizes the importance of hearing God's words, which he speaks. He tells the Jews who believe in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (8:31-32). Likewise, after a discussion about Abraham, Jesus tells the Jews, "Whoever keeps my word will never taste death" (8:52).

A spirituality of mission contains both the aspect of listening and that of believing. One listens to the Johannine Jesus; God sent him with God's words. Once God's words are heard, a person becomes a disciple, a believer, who knows the truth, and the truth sets him or her free to proclaim that truth boldly. Furthermore, keeping God's words preserves one from eternal death. When potential followers of Jesus open their minds and see the biggest picture possible, they recognize the awesomeness of the mission that begins with listening and believing.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: In what specific ways does Jesus speak the words of God to you?

PRAYER: Through your Son, Jesus Christ, I listen for your word, Lord God. Grant that I may believe what I hear, practice what I believe, and know your truth that sets me free. I ask this through the same Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Two-Edged Sword

Monday within the Octave of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12).

REFLECTION: A two-edged sword is one that is sharpened on both edges. The person wielding a two-edged sword cuts another in two ways in opposite directions, leaving a huge wide-open wound. This is why the author of Hebrews declares that God's word is sharper than any two-edged sword. The words God speaks are alive; they achieve the purpose for which God speaks them. In the book of Genesis, God speaks the word "light," and light appears. God speaks the word "land," and land appears. God speaks the word "sea," and the seas appear. Whatever word God speaks comes into existence. This is why the author of Hebrews declares God's word to be living and active.

Furthermore, God's words are able to separate what people cannot separate, namely, soul from spirit, joints from marrow. While the primary purpose of God's word is to create and save, it also judges what people cannot know about each other, namely, the thoughts and intentions of the heart. According to Hebrews, no creature is hidden from God, "but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom [all] must render an account" (4:13).

A spirituality of mission must include listening carefully to God's living and active word in a person's life. Once God

speaks a word, that word comes to be in one's life. God may speak the word "love," and one loves another. God may speak the word "writer," and one writes. God may speak the word "ministry," and one becomes a minister in any of the many meanings of that word. God knows if his word has been heard, because he knows all and judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart. In other words, God cannot be deceived.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What two-edged-sword word have you heard from God?

PRAYER: All-knowing God, you speak your creative word, and all that exists comes to be. Grant that I may hear the words you speak to me, and, with the help of your grace, make them incarnate in my daily life. I ask this through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Word Doers

Tuesday within the Octave of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "[B]e doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like" (Jas 1:22-24).

REFLECTION: Listening and believing, one aspect of a spirituality of mission, includes acting on—in the word of the letter of James, "doing"—the word. The letter of James addresses Jewish Christians in the late first century CE. James, in contrast to Paul's position on works, advocates the practice or living of the word heard. From James's point of view, if a person hears the word and doesn't incorporate it into his or her life, this lack of action is like seeing oneself in a mirror and promptly forgetting what one looks like. In other words, the word of God must become etched in human flesh so that it can be seen by others through the way one lives his or her life.

For example, God speaks the word "love," and love should be seen in the lives of Christians. James gives the example of caring for orphans and widows in distress. There are many ways to incorporate love for orphans and widows into one's life. A person can volunteer to work at an orphanage; a person can adopt an orphan; a person can contribute funds to support the orphanage. Widows can be visited in their homes or nursing homes; their grocery shopping can be done by others for them; they can be driven by others to their doctors' appointments.

As James makes perfectly clear, it is very easy for a Christian to deceive himself or herself. There are many hearers of the word who lie to their employers. There are many hearers of the word who cheat on their spouses. There are many hearers of the word who are only concerned with themselves. Such self-deception does not enable the word to be done. And if the word is not done, people cannot hear it. The old proverb puts it this way: What one does speaks so loudly another cannot hear a word one says!

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: In what specific ways are you a doer of the word?

PRAYER: Ever-living God, make me quick to listen to your word that has the power to save me. Once I have heard, give me the strength to be a doer of that word so others may see my good deeds and come to believe in you and your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Leave All

No Pillow

Wednesday within the Octave of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "A scribe then approached [Jesus] and said, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' Another of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead' " (Matt 8:18-22).

REFLECTION: Throughout the gospels, Jesus is portrayed as an itinerant preacher. Itinerancy characterizes Jesus' mission and that of his followers. Using two sayings he found in Q (referring to *quelle*, the German word for "source" and indicating material found only in Matthew's gospel and Luke's gospel), the Matthean Jesus gives two examples that illustrate how the demand to be itinerant also involves leaving everything behind.

The first example uses foxes and birds. Foxes dig dens; birds build nests. In other words, foxes and birds have homes. However, the Son of Man, Jesus in service to humanity, has no home, no bed, and no pillow. The second example concerns the very important practice of burying the dead. Jesus trumps this practice with the following of him. There is urgency to the mission that puts it on the top of the list, and this urgency requires leaving all—home and family—behind and following Jesus.

The word used today is "detachment." It means to separate oneself from something in order to be attached to something else. In the context of Matthew's gospel, one detaches from

home and family in order to attach to Jesus. There are no contingency plans; the safety of a home and family is forfeited. The praise that one might receive for having built a great house and buried family members is left behind in order to follow the itinerant preacher from Nazareth.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What have you left behind to follow Jesus?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, I hear your call to leave all behind in order to follow you. Pour on me the grace I need to face the future without turning back. You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

Don't Look Back

Thursday within the Octave of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "Another [person] said [to Jesus], 'I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.' Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God' " (Luke 9:61-62).

REFLECTION: The author of Luke's gospel presents the same two examples of itinerancy as does the author of Matthew's gospel (see above and Matt 8:18-22 and Luke 9:57-60). Both do this because both writers use material found in Q (referring to *quelle*, the German word for "source" and indicating material found only in Matthew's gospel and Luke's gospel). In Luke's version of the second person's request to bury his father, Jesus says, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:60). The last half of Jesus' response and Jesus' response to the man who wants to say farewell to his family indicate one of Luke's favorite themes: the proclamation of the kingdom of God.

Like the man who wants to bury his father, Luke presents a man who wants to say farewell to his family. This saying also illustrates both the itinerancy and the immediacy of the mission. Using a cryptic saying about not being able to look back when plowing a field because one is behind a horse and has reins around his neck, Jesus further emphasizes the urgency of the mission to proclaim God's kingdom. Following Jesus means there is only one direction: forward. One must keep moving; there is no room for regret. There are no second

thoughts. Any follower who even entertains turning around is not fit for God's kingdom.

It seems as if the Lukan Jesus is telling his followers that they need to be physically fit. After all, the metaphor he uses is plowing, which requires some degree of physical fitness in the context of how it was done in Jesus' day. In other words, couch potatoes need not apply! Proclaiming that God is present here and now and rules people's lives requires strength and firmness of purpose. Likewise, a spirituality of mission needs to consider one's physical fitness when it comes to following the itinerant Jesus in announcing the kingdom of God. Otherwise, one is tempted to keep looking back and may fall into the plow or the field or both.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: How physically fit are you for proclaiming the kingdom of God?

PRAYER: God of Jesus, you call me to plow the field of your world with the proclamation of your kingdom. Make me both physically and spiritually fit so that with urgency I may announce that Jesus is Lord to your glory, Father. With the Holy Spirit you are one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Patience

Friday within the Octave of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. . . . As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful" (Jas 5:7-8, 10-11).

REFLECTION: One who leaves all behind in order to follow Jesus must cultivate patience as part of his or her spirituality of mission. Patience, according to the author of the letter of James, is best characterized by the farmer, who plants his crop and then waits for the rain to fall. A person leaves all and gets moving on mission, knowing that the Lord is coming. Maybe a modern image of patience would be the operator of a motor vehicle who drives on the streets and waits for the lights at the intersections to change without any anxiety or road rage.

The result of leaving all behind and cultivating patience is good suffering. Good suffering is hard to find because the world is saturated with pleasure from immediate gratification. A spirituality of mission has no place for immediate gratification; as soon as hardship of any kind comes one's way, good suffering is abandoned. Endurance, like that of the prophets, builds character, substance, maturity. Without good suffering,

there is no growth, and many people remain children throughout their adult lives. Through his innocent suffering, Job came to understand a great truth, namely, God strengthens those he chooses through suffering. In fact, through his endurance, Job not only learned who God was but he also came to a deeper knowledge of himself.

Modern technology is often the antithesis of suffering because no patience is required. If one needs to contact another person, a text, tweet, or email is but a few keystrokes away. Since almost everyone carries a cell phone, no one can escape a telephone call. Information of any kind is available with a search of the internet on the computer. Even the car tells its driver when it wants an oil change, its tires rotated, or its door is open. While modern technology is good in many ways, it removes endurance, good suffering, from life, and, consequently, the development of patience, which is an important ingredient in a spirituality of mission.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: In what good suffering are you engaged? How does it produce patience in you?

PRAYER: Like the farmer who waits for his precious crop from the earth, I await your coming, Lord. Teach me patience when I speak in your name, and strengthen my heart with endurance through my suffering. You are Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

Knocking on the Door

Saturday within the Octave of Easter

SCRIPTURE: The Son of Man said to John of Patmos, "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation: 'I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. . . . Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me' " (Rev 3:14-16, 20).

REFLECTION: In the book of Revelation, John of Patmos receives a revelation from the Son of Man, who tells him to write seven letters, each to a specific church or congregation. In the letter to the Laodiceans, John reminds them that they have become lukewarm. In other words, they have lost their initial enthusiasm for their mission. Nothing happens when enthusiasm is lukewarm.

Switching metaphors from hot, cold, and lukewarm water, John employs the image of Jesus standing outside the door knocking. A quick search of the internet will quickly reveal many such pictures based on this text. Most of them portray Jesus, dressed in a red outer garment, standing before a door with no door handle or knob on his side. The person on the other side of the door must open the door for him to enter and dine.

Opening the door means leaving all behind. The safety of the inside—no one can get in because the door handle or knob

is located only inside—opens to the risk of the outside. The person inside cannot know what or who may be on the other side of the door. A spirituality of mission also includes that risk. Answering the knock on the door draws one out of lukewarmness to hotness. Inside security is left behind in order to face outside risk; it may be Jesus knocking on the door.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What one time have you risked opening your door and discovered Jesus on the other side?

PRAYER: Son of Man, you come knocking on my door in order to call me to mission in your service. Transform my lukewarm security into hot risk so that I may be willing to leave all behind and proclaim your kingdom to the ends of the earth. I ask this of you, Lord Jesus Christ, living and reigning with the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

New

Octave (Second Sunday) of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "I [John] saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. . . . And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, . . . 'See, I am making all things new. . . . Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children' " (Rev 21:1, 3a, 5a, 7).

REFLECTION: Once all is left behind, newness is experienced. However, a person cannot have the new until the old is abandoned. The first heaven and the first earth must pass away. The chaos of the sea must be replaced by a new order. God is the God of this new order, and those who have left all behind are his children. They have conquered their fear and been transformed into newness.

A spirituality of mission is always in the process of leaving behind the old in order to be transformed into the new. A person who develops a missionary spirituality knows that he or she must get out of the way and let God be God. The individual is a witness to what God can do. He or she becomes a vehicle for God to transform what is old into what is new. A person abandons security in order to submit to God. The result is that all that was left behind is given back beyond measure.

Richard Bach, the twentieth-century American novelist, captured this best when he wrote about loving someone and setting him or her free. If the person comes back, he or she belonged to the person who freed him or her. If he or she does not come back, then the person never belonged to the other

originally. In a spirituality of mission, one might say that all must be left behind. If God makes it new and returns it, it was a person's to begin with. If God does not make it new and return it, it was not a person's originally.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What have you given to God and received back made new?

PRAYER: Creator God, you are always in the process of creating a new heaven and a new earth for those who return all to you. Help me abandon everything to you in trust so that I may be transformed into one of your children. I ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, who is Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

4

COMMISSIONED

Go!

Monday of the Second Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. . . . And Jesus came and said to them, . . . 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age' " (Matt 28:16, 18a, 19-20).

REFLECTION: At the end of Matthew's gospel only eleven disciples are left. Judas, the betrayer, went off and hanged himself (Matt 27:5). So, the eleven disciples meet Jesus on a mountain, one of the Matthean Jesus' favorite places to say anything important. This Moses look-a-like commissions the disciples; he sends them to the nations to evangelize. Furthermore, he promises to be with them until the end of time. So, wherever they go he goes, too.

Those who are commissioned are given power and duties by the Matthean Jesus. Jesus shares the authority that has been given to him through his cross and resurrection (Matt 27:18). Then, he explains that their duties include evangelization of Gentiles and Jews, baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching the way of the higher righteousness that Jesus has preached throughout Matthew's gospel. In other words, they are to teach that a person does the right thing because it is the right thing to do.

Maybe the most important word in Jesus' final words to his followers is "Go." A spirituality of mission includes the response of going to where one is commissioned to go and doing what one is commissioned to do. The mission is real, and it requires much effort, especially when it is given to one belonging to a culture of comfort. In a culture of comfort, one prefers to stay at home, seated on the couch or in the recliner. In a culture of comfort, not saying anything is preferred to evangelizing the various nationalities living in the same neighborhood. And teaching by one's example of living righteousness may mean ostracism for not being politically correct. Since Matthew's gospel ends with the great commission, no one knows how well the eleven disciples responded to Jesus' words. However, in this day and time it is not too hard to determine how many people on the street where one lives respond to the same commission.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What is your response to Jesus' commission to go to the nations, to baptize, and to teach?

PRAYER: Almighty Father, you shared your power with your Son, who commissioned his followers to spread the good news of his death and resurrection through baptism with the whole world. Grant that my response to his commission may bring the gospel to all I meet. I ask this through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Proclaim

Tuesday of the Second Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: Jesus said to the eleven, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:15-18).

REFLECTION: Mark's gospel will have three endings forever. The original ending is 16:8. However, at some point in transmission, another author added two additional sentences to 16:8, which are called the shorter ending of Mark. This shorter ending is a commission. It was added, most likely, to soften the original ending of Mark, which closes with Jesus' apostles having run away when he was arrested. The other ending, 16:9-20, seems to be a summary of the ending of Matthew's gospel and the ending of Luke's gospel. This longer ending also serves to soften the original ending of Mark by providing post-resurrection appearances of Jesus and a commissioning.

The longer ending commissions the eleven, while they are sitting at table, to go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to all creation. The mission is broader here than in Matthew's gospel; instead of only the nations receiving the gospel, every living thing now must hear it. The Johannine verse, 16, betrays the perspective of the author of John's gospel who

was overly reacting to his quest to give Christians an identity separate from their mother, Judaism. The success of the commission will be indicated by all kinds of signs, which the Markan Jesus refuses to give (Mark 8:12)!

Despite the obvious fact that the shorter and longer endings of Mark's gospel were not written by the same author who wrote the rest of the work, the commission to proclaim the good news to all of creation remains. The gospel is the good news of the victory of Jesus Christ over death. This is the message the young man gives to the women at the tomb: "[Y]ou are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here" (Mark 16:6). That is all that one needs to proclaim. That is the basic message in a spirituality of mission.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: How do you proclaim the gospel, namely, that Jesus was crucified and raised?

PRAYER: Ever-living God, after he was crucified, you raised your Son, Jesus Christ, to new life and entrusted this good news to those who believe and follow him. Grant that my proclamation of the gospel may bring many to faith in him, who is Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

Witness

Wednesday of the Second Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: Jesus said to the eleven, "'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things'" (Luke 24:44-48).

REFLECTION: The Lukan Jesus commissions his disciples as witnesses to his suffering, death, and resurrection. A witness is one who testifies to what he or she knows to be the truth. The disciples are told to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to the nations, as the result of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection; their beginning point is Jerusalem, and from there they will take the message to the ends of the earth. What most people don't understand about the passage is that the English word "witness" is a translation of the Greek word "martyr." In other words, those commissioned by the Lukan Jesus will suffer and die, like he, as they preach repentance and forgiveness of sins; they also have the hope that, like Jesus, they will be raised from the dead.

The author's understanding is that the new covenant established by Jesus emerges out of the covenant God established with Israel. In other words, Christianity grows out of Judaism.

This is why the Lukan Jesus declares that everything written about him in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms had to be fulfilled. He opens the minds of the disciples to understand the Scriptures. Lurking beneath the surface here is another important Lukan presupposition, namely, that Jesus is a new suffering servant, like that described in Isaiah (cf. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13–53:12), who is the favorite prophet of the author of Luke's gospel.

Jesus is the martyr extraordinaire in Luke's gospel. He voluntarily suffers death. Everyone in Luke's account of his crucifixion declares him to be innocent: Pilate, Herod, one co-crucified thief, and the centurion at the foot of the cross. Just as God commissioned Jesus to be a witness to his new work in the world through his suffering, Jesus commissions his followers to be witnesses through their suffering, which will result from preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins throughout the world. What was true for Jesus and his first followers remains true for commissioned followers two thousand years later.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What suffering have you endured as a result of being a witness to repentance and forgiveness of sins?

PRAYER: Merciful God, through the witness of the suffering of your only-begotten Son, you brought forth repentance and forgiveness of sins. Keep me faithful to his mission so that I may one day share in his resurrected life. I ask through the same Jesus Christ, who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Plan

Thursday of the Second Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "So when [the apostles] had come together, they asked [Jesus], 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth' " (Acts 1:6-8).

REFLECTION: The author of Luke's gospel is also the author of the Acts of the Apostles. The two volumes work together to present what the author understands to be God's plan of salvation for the whole world. The apostles are struggling to understand this plan, as seen in their question to Jesus about restoring the kingdom to Israel. They want to know when the ancient Davidic realm will be restored. Jesus, as he has done before, explains that that information is known only by God the Father. What they need to know is that they will be given the authority they need to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Then, the Lukan Jesus lays out the plan, what biblical scholars call a programmatic text. They are to witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. In Lukan geography, the apostles begin proclaiming the resurrection in Jerusalem. Then, they take it throughout Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth or Rome. About a third of the way through the Acts of the Apostles, the reader meets Paul, who,

after his conversion, takes the message of the resurrection to the Gentiles. At the end of the Acts of the Apostles, Paul is under house arrest in Rome, witnessing the resurrection of Jesus and the salvation of God that has been brought to the Gentiles. In other words, in Lukan understanding the plan has been accomplished.

While most people do not prepare a written plan for their whole lives, they do make short-range designs. For example, most people plan to graduate from high school. Many plan to graduate with a degree from college. And still a few others plan to graduate with a master's degree or doctoral degree of some kind. Plans also involve career, home, marriage, children, and so forth. It is only near the end of one's life that a person can see the big picture of the plan, that is, how the various parts formed the whole plan of one's life. By reflecting upon the plan of one's life, a person can see how the Holy Spirit empowered it.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What has been the plan of your life? How was the Holy Spirit behind it? What were you commissioned to do?

PRAYER: We cannot know the times or periods that you, Father, have set by your own authority. But you give me power with the Holy Spirit, and you make me a witness of Jesus' resurrection wherever you send me. Keep me faithful to the commission I have received from your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Peace

Friday of the Second Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you' " (John 20:19-21).

REFLECTION: In John's gospel, on Easter Sunday evening Jesus appears to his disciples after his resurrection from the dead, and his greeting to them is "Peace." One must remember that earlier in the work, Jesus had told his disciples: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives" (14:27). Jesus brings an awesome silence, a state of tranquility to his fearful disciples. His peace is one that restores security and harmony within the community of his followers. Before he can do this, however, he has to provide positive identification; so, he shows them the holes in his forearms and the uniquely Johannine spear wound in his side. Knowing he is Jesus enables the disciples to rejoice.

Again, the risen Christ offers peace to his fearful disciples in order to end their uncertainty and restore concord among them. Then, he commissions them in the same manner as he had been commissioned by his Father to forgive sin. Throughout John's gospel, the primary sin is that of disbelief. Jesus' gift of peace removes fear and the disbelief that it produces

and restores the security and tranquility of the community of the faithful.

There is no room for fear in a spirituality of mission. Followers of Jesus are commissioned with peace, concord. Jesus' peace is not the opposite of war; it is the silence that emerges from within every person who believes that God raised Jesus from the dead. Fear causes the disciple to huddle behind a locked door. Peace causes the disciple to be sent into the world with an inner harmony or concord that even war cannot disrupt.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What type of peace have you experienced through your mission to be a modern disciple of Jesus?

PRAYER: Father, through your Son, Jesus Christ, you have given me the gift of peace. Never let fear keep me behind locked doors. Grant that your Holy Spirit fills me with inner harmony so that I may fearlessly proclaim the resurrection of him who is Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

Sent

Apostles

Saturday of the Second Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "[Jesus] went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons. So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him" (Mark 3:13-19).

REFLECTION: In Mark's gospel, twelve men are named apostles by Jesus. The passage above is not focused on their names, but on the number of them. There are twelve apostles to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. They are named apostles, that is, messengers, and they are sent on a twofold mission. The message they are to deliver is that the kingdom of God is near; God is breaking into human history in the works and words of Jesus of Nazareth. They are also given the authority to cast out demons. Because the author of this gospel loves exorcisms, he assigns the apostles the same role that Jesus has, namely, to set people free from whatever oppresses them.

Mark's gospel, the oldest of the canonical narratives named gospels, preserves some very interesting facts about the group Jesus chose. In derivative gospels (Matthew and Luke), these interesting notes will disappear. First, James and John are

called Sons of Thunder, illustrating what must have been their turbulent personalities. Cananaean, a descriptive of Simon (not Peter), refers to an anti-Roman revolutionary group who would be known as a terrorist organization today; the Cananaeans were agitators, who disturbed what the Romans called the Pax Romana (the peace of Rome). Finally, Simon is given the name Peter, which means rock; of course, in Mark's gospel he is anything other than a rock. Once he denies knowing Jesus three times he disappears from the narrative, never to be seen or heard from again. We know little to nothing about the rest of the apostles.

If Jesus were walking the earth today, he would name apostles those men and women most people would never choose. He would name the person who always has an opinion that is exactly the opposite of the group. He would name those who spend their lives attempting to change things, those who never put their stamp of approval on things the way they are. He might even name the weak in faith as apostles in the hope that they might repent and grow strong. The group Jesus chose in Mark's gospel is the most unlikely gang anyone would ever choose to be apostles.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: Why would Jesus choose you to be an apostle?

PRAYER: God of Judaism and Christianity, once you chose twelve tribes to be your people, and through your Son, Jesus Christ, you chose twelve men to proclaim to the whole world the nearness of your kingdom. Count me among those who have been sent. I ask this in the name of your Son, who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Disciples

Third Sunday of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him" (Matt 10:1-4).

REFLECTION: The first thing the reader will note about the above passage from Matthew's gospel is the change from Mark's apostles to Matthean disciples. In fact, there may have been three different groups who followed Jesus: apostles, disciples, and followers. By the time Matthew's gospel was written in the eighties of the first century, the three different groups had been melded into one group identified as twelve disciples, twelve apostles, or twelve followers. This is the only place in Matthew's gospel where the author even calls the twelve apostles. Furthermore, the reader will notice that the mission of those sent is primarily healing, like that of the Matthean Jesus. Instead of casting out Markan demons, Matthean disciples have authority over unclean spirits, which were thought to make a person ill, in addition to curing every disease and illness.

The author of this work omits Mark's Sons of Thunder designation for James and John; he further softens their turbulent personalities by portraying their mother asking for positions

on the right and left of Jesus in his kingdom (Matt 20:20-23) instead of the Markan brothers asking for the same positions (Mark 10:35-40). While Mark mentions a Matthew in his list of apostles, Matthew's gospel indicates that he is Matthew the tax collector; Mark does not identify him as a tax collector because the name of the tax collector in Mark's gospel is Levi (Mark 2:14). Matthew's gospel keeps the Cananaean designation for Simon (not Peter), most likely thinking that it correctly identified one who was zealous for the Jews in the 66–70 CE war with Rome. However, there are no political concerns expressed in Matthew's gospel.

In Matthean understanding, the disciples are healers. A spirituality of mission has plenty of room for a healing ministry. At first one may think of the healing work of doctors, physician assistants, and nurses in hospitals and home care ministry. However, there are also hospice workers, who walk with both the dying and family members at times of terminal illness. Adult children who take care of their parents at home or visit them in nursing homes and acute care facilities are serving as ministers to the sick. There are those who assist those with mental illness, either professionally or amateurishly. The author of Matthew's gospel sees such ministry as characteristic of Jesus' disciples, and so should modern followers.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What is your healing ministry?

PRAYER: Rejuvenating God, through the ministry of Jesus, you brought healing to the whole world. As a disciple of your Son, keep me faithful to his curing work. I ask this through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Prayer

Monday of the Third Week of Easter

Scripture: "Now during those days [Jesus] went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor" (Luke 6:12-16).

Reflection: If Jesus does anything more than eat in Luke's gospel, it is pray. The Lukan Jesus is found at prayer before he is baptized (3:21), in deserted places (5:16), before he questions his disciples about his identity (9:18), before his transfiguration (9:28-29), before he teaches his disciples how to pray (11:1), on the Mount of Olives (22:41, 44-45), after he is crucified (23:34), and before he dies (23:46). He also prays before choosing twelve of his disciples whom he named apostles (6:12). In other words, in Lukan understanding, prayer leads to the right decision.

Lukan disciples are ambassadors of Jesus' mission, also serving as judges of the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:30). In order to emphasize this role, the author of Luke's gospel, like the author of Matthew's gospel before him, softens the material found in Mark's gospel. The Sons of Thunder moniker for James and John is removed. Simon (not Peter) is designated as a Zealot, instead of a Cananaean, to indicate his zealousness as

a disciple of Jesus. Mark's Thaddaeus is replaced with Luke's Judas son of James. And Mark's Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus, becomes Luke's Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

The focus of the author of Luke's gospel is clearly on prayer, an important aspect of a spirituality of mission. Those who are sent as ambassadors and judges are delegated with prayer. Just as prayer permeates the narrative of the events involving Jesus, so prayer should permeate the events of a modern disciple of Jesus. Such prayer is not about the person deciding what to do and then telling God what he needs to do. The prayer demonstrated by Jesus consists of asking God what he wants done, then doing it. In a culture awash in individual power, Luke's gospel presents the antidote of God's power. A spirituality of mission begins by seeking God's will through prayer, because it is God's mission.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What role does prayer play in your life?

PRAYER: Father, your Son Jesus taught his disciples to pray that your name be hallowed and that your kingdom come. Grant that I may know your mission for me and willingly carry it out. All praise to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; you are one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Harvest

Tuesday of the Third Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "[T]he Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest' " (Luke 10:1-2).

REFLECTION: The unique account of Jesus sending seventy others in pairs in Luke's gospel is meant to echo the account of Moses choosing seventy elders to judge the tribes of Israel (Num 11:16-17). Some manuscripts of Luke's gospel contain seventy-two others to echo the two men who were not with the seventy and Moses but became judges anyway (Num 11:26-28). Regardless of the number, the focus is on traveling in pairs in order to bring in the harvest. Luke's second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, often portrays missionaries traveling in pairs (8:14; 15:32, 40) to bring the good news of Jesus' resurrection to the ends of the earth.

They are sent with the message in order to gather in the harvest. Of course, harvest is a metaphor for the gathering of Israel. The author of Luke's gospel favors the prophet Isaiah, who wrote about God gathering the people of Israel one by one (27:27), a reference to the prophet's hope for the return of the survivors scattered by their Babylonian conquerors. The author of Luke's gospel applies the metaphor to those who believe the announcement of the seventy(-two), namely, that the kingdom of God has come near (10:9).

A spirituality of mission must include the sending of announcers with the message that God's kingdom is near. Their response of faith makes others the fruit of the harvest. God's kingdom, his presence in the world, is manifested through the ministry of Jesus (preaching, healing, feeding, etc.) and through the ministry of those sent on mission both to proclaim and to continue what Jesus did.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What harvest have you gathered through your proclamation of Jesus' ministry and your continuance of it?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you continue your ministry of enacting your Father's kingdom through those you send today. Send me, and keep me faithful to your words and deeds. Grant that I may bring an abundant harvest to the kingdom, where you live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Replacing Judas

Wednesday of the Third Week of Easter

Scripture: "When [the apostles] had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers" (Acts 1:13-14).

Reflection: After the author of Luke's gospel re-narrates the ascension of Jesus—he first tells the story in Luke 24:50-51—in the Acts of the Apostles, he names the eleven apostles, minus Judas Iscariot, whom the reader discovers fell headlong into a field and "burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out" (1:18). He portrays them as devoting themselves to prayer in imitation of Jesus in Luke's gospel. Then, he narrates the election of Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot (1:21-26). This move is very important for the author of this two-volume work, because it portrays the apostles doing what Jesus did, namely, sending people on mission.

Later, the apostles will choose seven men and give them the mission of waiting on tables (6:2-6). Paul and Barnabas will be sent (13:2-3), as well as Judas and Silas (15:22-27), Barnabas and Mark, and Paul and Silas (15:39b-40). They are sent on specific missions, and, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, accept their responsibilities joyfully.

The replacement of Judas continues today, along with the sending of others on modern missionary endeavors. Many people go on mission trips to help build houses for the homeless, to dig wells for clean water for the thirsty, to teach the ignorant, and to demonstrate sustainable farming to feed the hungry. Meeting the basic needs of other human beings is a modern way of proclaiming the word of God without speaking a single word. Those who engage in such missionary endeavors proclaim the nearness of God's kingdom through the way they live their lives in service to others. One does not need to stand on the street corner and shout Bible verses; all a modern, sent disciple needs to do is to put into practice what he or she has heard, just like the first followers of Jesus imitated him in their choosing of others for various missions.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: In what specific ways do you imitate Jesus?

PRAYER: Holy Father, send me the gift of your Holy Spirit, who will guide me on the mission you entrust to me and keep me faithful to the ministry of your Son. You are one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Free from Worry

Do Not Worry

Thursday of the Third Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: Jesus said to his disciples, "[D]o not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? . . . Therefore, do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' . . . So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today" (Matt 6:25, 31, 34).

REFLECTION: In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel, Jesus tells his disciples not to worry about food or clothing; the persistent attention given to food or clothing does not characterize a follower of Jesus. A disciple, according to the Matthean Jesus, strives for the kingdom of God and his righteousness. In Matthew's gospel, God's kingdom has arrived in the ministry of Jesus; thus a follower who strives for that kingdom is one who actively lives without concern for food and clothes. Furthermore, because the author of Matthew's gospel here attaches his major concern of righteousness—doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do—a follower of Jesus is focused on others first. Striving for the kingdom of God and his righteousness places a disciple in a position of absolute trust of God. This faith trusts that the Father, who knows that his creatures need food and clothing, will provide them. God cares for his own.

In order to urge his hearers to embrace such absolute trust in God, Jesus uses the birds of the air as an example. They

engage in none of the sowing, reaping, or harvesting that human beings do, yet God provides food for them. Likewise, the delicate wildflowers neither toil nor spin like human beings do, yet God clothes the fields with their beauty. Thus, there is no need to worry about food or clothing; since people are certainly more valuable to God than birds and wildflowers, then people should be all the more trusting in God, who knows the needs of everything he has created.

Trust in God without worry about the basic essentials of life must be a part of everyone's spirituality of mission. A person cannot answer God's call, listening attentively, and leave all behind in order to be commissioned and sent unless he or she is free from worry. In a culture that teaches people to trust only themselves, absolute trust of God is difficult to achieve. Too many times people have trusted others only to have their faith in them smashed to pieces. Jesus' teaching in Matthew's gospel is focused on freedom from worry so that the mission can be embraced. Taking a day's problems one day at a time is enough for the day; to worry about tomorrow robs one of the opportunities to trust God today.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: About what do you worry? How does each of those worries get in your way of trusting God?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, you know my needs for food, drink, and clothing. As I strive for your righteousness, deepen my trust that you will provide. Strengthen me in your service as I seek the kingdom, where you live with your Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

A Single Hour

Friday of the Third Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: Jesus said to his disciples, "[C]an any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? . . . [Y]our Father knows that you need [food and clothing]. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well" (Luke 12:25-26, 30-31).

REFLECTION: The author of Luke's gospel uses some of the same material that the author of Matthew's gospel uses. Biblical scholars refer to this as Q (from the German word *quelle*, meaning "source"). The author of Luke's gospel polishes the sayings, while the author of Matthew's gospel inserts his own unique theme—righteousness—into the sayings of Jesus.

The Lukan Jesus asks his hearers if they can add an hour to their lives, and they have to answer that they cannot. Thus, if they cannot do such a small thing as add an hour to their day, why worry about food and clothing. The ravens don't worry about such things. The wildflowers do not worry about such things. God feeds the ravens, and God clothes the fields with the wildflowers. The best that people can do is trust the Father, who knows that they need food and clothing.

Luke wants his readers to see the big picture of the kingdom of God. If a person grasps the understanding that God is in charge, there is no place for worry, which bogs one down here and now. Instead of spending energy on seeking food and clothing, it is better to spend it striving for God's kingdom,

and God, who takes great pleasure in giving his kingdom to people, will provide all the food and clothing they need. God can even add an hour to one's life!

Freedom from worry characterizes a spirituality of mission.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: About what have you ceased to worry? How did God provide for you?

PRAYER: Father, I cannot add a single hour to my life through worry, but I can trust you to provide for all my needs. As I strive for your kingdom, grant me the perseverance of Jesus, who is Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

Persecution

Saturday of the Third Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: Jesus said to Peter, James, John, and Andrew, "When [Jews and Gentiles] bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit" (Mark 13:11).

REFLECTION: The Markan Jesus speaks about persecution to four of his disciples in his second discourse, often called the little apocalypse (Mark 13:1-37). He instructs the four disciples not to worry about how to defend themselves or what they might say, but to trust the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who will prompt the words from their lips. The author of Mark's gospel does not have a developed understanding of the Holy Spirit. The Markan John the Baptist declares that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit (1:8). Jesus sees the Spirit descend like a dove on him after his baptism (1:10), after which the Spirit drives him into the wilderness (1:12). The Markan Jesus teaches that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is an unforgivable sin (3:29), and that King David was inspired by the Holy Spirit (12:36). These few passages in Mark's gospel are focused on the inspiration provided by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the author of Mark's gospel understands that the role of the Holy Spirit is to inspire or fill people with appropriate words in any situation so that the gospel can be proclaimed.

Both Matthew's gospel and Luke's gospel contain the same saying about the Holy Spirit. The author of Matthew focuses on the role of the Holy Spirit as the inspirer of disciples. When

they are persecuted, the Matthean Jesus tells them in his missionary discourse, they are not to worry about how they are to speak or what they are to say, for what they are to say will be given to them at that time; it is not they who speak, "but the Spirit of [their] Father speaking through [them]" (Matt 10:20). The author of Luke locates this saying among several others that Jesus speaks to his disciples. Luke is focused on the teaching role of the Holy Spirit. The Lukan Jesus tells his disciples not to worry about how to defend themselves when persecuted. The Holy Spirit "will teach [them] at that very hour what [they] ought to say" (Luke 12:12).

While Christians around the world are persecuted, most people will not experience any kind of punishment. Today, a Christian is more likely to experience prejudice because of the way he or she lives. For example, a Christian who keeps holy the Lord's Day may lose a job because he or she refuses to work on Sunday, even though there is a law that protects this from happening. In certain parts of the world, Christians are shunned if they move into a neighborhood where another faith is more prominent. Christians who go door-to-door may discover doors slammed in their faces as they announce the gospel. Jesus tells all believers to trust that the Holy Spirit will inspire them what to say.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: In what ways have you experienced persecution? What did the Holy Spirit inspire and teach you to say?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, your Holy Spirit inspires those who believe so that they know what to say when persecuted. Fill me with that Holy Spirit so that I may proclaim the gospel of your Son, Jesus Christ, who is Lord, forever and ever. Amen.

Not Isolated

Fourth Sunday of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living" (Rom 14:7-9).

REFLECTION: In Pauline thought, individual isolation cannot exist. Paul understands that there is but one body of Christ, composed of many members. Each member has been given a gift for the good of the whole body. That is why he writes to the Romans, telling them it doesn't matter if one is alive or dead; he or she belongs to the Lord. Nothing can separate a person from the love of God. Therefore, there is no reason to worry about the living or the dead. Through baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ, a person is incorporated in the body of Christ, and nothing—not even death—can separate or isolate one from the body. Therefore, there is no need to worry, because both the living and the dead are linked in an inseparable bond through Jesus Christ, the Lord.

It is impossible for a member of the body of Christ to live only for himself or herself or to die only for himself or herself. A spirituality of mission should be focused on the common good, not on the individual's good alone. Instead of asking, "How will this affect me?" a person immersed in the body of Christ first asks, "How will this affect others? Is this good

for the whole body?" The former question leads to isolation. The later questions lead to community.

Paul's words serve as an antidote in a culture of selfishness. If a person begins with the common good, he or she will make decisions that are different than if the person begins with himself or herself. Instead of considering it OK to drive a car and text, the person who begins with the common good would never think of endangering the lives of others or his or her own by not being attentive to the road. Instead of slowing down when seeing a police car parked along the road or the street, a parent who begins with the common good will always drive the speed limit in order not to teach his or her children that it is OK to speed as long as the driver does not get caught. Such programs as neighborhood watch or neighborhood patrol begin with the common good for a neighborhood; those who participate submit their individual concerns to that of the community. A spirituality of mission teaches that there is no need to worry because the common good trumps the individual's good.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What difference does living for the common good make in your life? In what instance have you sacrificed what was good for you for the good of the community?

PRAYER: Ever-living God, your Son died and you raised him from the dead so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Keep me focused on the common good, the body of Christ, so that I might live and die for him, who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Don't Worry, Be Happy

Monday of the Fourth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I [Paul] will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:4-7).

REFLECTION: In his letter to the Philippians, Paul commands his readers to rejoice in Christ Jesus. In Pauline thought, Jesus' return is imminent; Paul thinks that he will be alive when Christ returns in glory. Of course, Paul was wrong! However, his expectation of Christ's imminent return is the context for all of his letters. That is why he tells the Christians at Philippi not to worry about anything; there is nothing to worry about in light of the belief that Christ is coming back soon.

While the Philippians await this great day, they are instructed to present their needs to God in prayers of supplication and in prayers of thanksgiving. Since God already knows what is needed before one asks, once the pray-er voices his or her petitions and thanksgivings, God's peace, which cannot be totally understood, will stand guard, like a soldier, at a person's heart and mind. This confidence, this lack of worry because God has everything under control, is what enables the Philippians to rejoice.

What was true for the Philippians remains true today. God already knows what the members of the body of his Son need.

A spirituality of mission fosters a confidence that God will provide; therefore, there is no need to worry about anything. The lyrics of Bobby McFerrin's song "Don't Worry, Be Happy" emphasize Paul's words to the Philippians using modern examples. McFerrin's song says that we have some trouble in every life. All we have to do is stop worrying and be happy. If someone steals your bed, rejoice. If your landlord is suing you for not paying your rent, rejoice. Worry causes one's face to frown, and that brings down everyone. So, we should not worry, and we should be happy.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: About what do you worry the most? How can confidence in God enable you to rejoice instead of worry?

PRAYER: Mighty God, you know my needs even before I present my supplications to you. Graciously hear this prayer of thanksgiving, and bestow upon me your peace, which guards my heart and mind. I ask this in the name of Christ Jesus, who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

7

Purpose

Dependence

Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "[Jesus] said to [the twelve], 'Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.' So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent" (Mark 6:10-12).

REFLECTION: In Mark's gospel, the twelve are totally dependent on those who receive them. Jesus instructs them to stay with those who welcome them. They are told not to take anything on their journey except a walking stick; they are told to wear nothing but a tunic and sandals. They are to carry no bread, no bag, no money, no change of clothes. Furthermore, if they cannot find someone to welcome them, they merely shake off the dust from their feet, a sign of social protest against those who show no hospitality.

Thus, stripped of all but the basic essentials, the twelve have but one purpose, and that is to proclaim repentance. They are vulnerable in their mission to proclaim repentance to all. Most people think of repentance as feeling sorry for one's sins. However, that is easy repentance, and it passes almost as quickly as it arrives. Heartfelt repentance begins with a person changing his or her mind about something; then, the person changes his or her behavior. For example, true repentance begins with the message that God shows no partiality. Those who hear the message become aware of their prejudices. They begin to change the way they think about people who have

a different color of skin. The change is demonstrated in their behavior; no more racist remarks, jokes, or favoritism emerges from their mouths. That's repentance.

In a politically correct culture, behavior often does not reflect a new way of thinking after hearing the word of God. A person can be prejudiced by race, creed, sexual orientation, or age in thinking, but never show it in behavior. Hearing the message of Jesus does not cause a change in thinking, even though a change in behavior may be seen due to political correctness. A spirituality of mission has no place for political correctness. Followers of Jesus are dependent upon those who welcome them, but they are also responsible for proclaiming real repentance in the hope of changing the hearer's thinking and, consequently, changing his or her behavior.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: As a follower of Jesus, how do you proclaim repentance? How do others receive you and your message?

PRAYER: Lord God, your Son taught his disciples to depend upon those who welcomed them and their message of repentance. Make me a faithful disciple, and keep me faithful to the purpose entrusted to me by Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Lost Sheep

Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "[The] twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near"'" (Matt 10:5-7).

REFLECTION: In Matthew's gospel, the author is focused on the mission to the Jews, the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Jews are God's chosen people; they are the heirs to God's promises sealed in the covenant with Abraham and renewed with Moses, Joshua, and Ezra. Because of this context of the author of Matthew's gospel, the Matthean Jesus instructs his twelve apostles to preach the nearness of God's kingdom only to the Jews. Later in the narrative when a Canaanite woman, that is, a Gentile, approaches Jesus and requests help for her demon-possessed daughter, Jesus declares, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24). However, she begs him for help, and he, recognizing her faith, instantly heals her daughter.

While the Matthean Jesus heals Gentiles, he instructs his apostles to stay away from them. In the world of the first century, there were only two groups of people: Jews and Gentiles. What distinguished them was circumcision. Jewish males were marked with the same sign of the covenant that Abraham received: circumcision. Gentiles, primarily Greeks and Romans, considered this practice to be mutilation. Jesus also tells the twelve to stay out of Samaritan towns. In Jesus'

world, Samaritans were like a third group—neither Jews nor Gentiles. They were the result of Israelites intermarrying with Assyrians; Jews hated Samaritans.

Only at the end of the gospel does the Matthean Jesus commission his disciples to go to all the nations, that is, the Gentiles. The mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel is not revoked; the purpose of the mission is expanded to the whole world. This is the mission inherited by followers of Jesus today. A spirituality of mission must be focused on the big picture, the whole world. While the ancient dichotomy of Jews and Gentiles no longer applies, many people find modern ways to place people into stereotypical groups. The mission of Jesus, from that to the Jews to that of all the nations (Gentiles), cannot be narrowed beyond the world.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: How narrow is your mission? How broad is your mission?

PRAYER: God of Jews and Gentiles, your Son began his mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and from there he expanded it to the Gentiles. Strengthen my resolve to bring the good news of the nearness of your kingdom to the whole world. I ask this in the name of Jesus, the Lord. Amen.

Agents

Thursday of the Fourth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "[Jesus] sent [the twelve] out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, 'Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic.' . . . They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere" (Luke 9:2-3, 6).

REFLECTION: The author of Luke's gospel understands the twelve to be agents of the proclamation of God's kingdom. They, like Jesus, bear witness to what God is doing. They are sent by Jesus to proclaim that God's reign is here and to heal. That is the purpose of their mission. To demonstrate their complete reliance upon God for everything, they are to take nothing with them on their journey. The Markan Jesus permitted his disciples to take a staff and sandals; the Lukan Jesus permits them to take nothing. Thus, they will not be distracted from proclaiming the good news and curing disease, that is, bearing witness to God's mighty deeds.

An agent is one who acts for or in the place of another by authority from the other. In other words, a certain effect is caused by an agent. Luke's gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, his second volume, feature the disciples as agents who proclaim the kingdom of God and effect God's reign by curing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead, and so on. In other words, the disciples, given authority by Jesus, continue Jesus' ministry; they do what he did and witness to the mighty deeds of God.

Often, modern people think that the time of God's mighty deeds ended with the codification of the books of the Bible. However, that couldn't be further from the truth. Modern agents of God's kingdom are found in parish offices where an office manager heals a parishioner by listening to her recent trials at the grocery store. The kingdom of God is proclaimed when parishioners greet fellow parishioners before Sunday Mass begins, welcoming them to the celebration and telling them how important it is for them to be there. When those grieving the loss of a family member are invited to a short reflection on the understanding that through death life is changed, not ended, the person leading the meditation is an agent of God's kingdom. In those and in other similar experiences nothing is needed except the willingness to be an agent of God's kingdom.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: In what recent experience have you been an agent of God's kingdom? What was needed for you to serve in that way?

PRAYER: Relying totally upon you, O God, I know you send people to proclaim your kingdom and to heal. Through the Holy Spirit, make me an agent of your mighty deeds so that all may come to know your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Proclaim Christ

Friday of the Fourth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. . . . But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. . . . For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you" (2 Cor 4:5, 7, 11-12).

REFLECTION: According to Paul, the purpose of one's mission is to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. The focus of the mission is not on the self, as is usually the case in the modern world; it is, rather, the proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord, and, consequently, those who do so are, like Paul, serving as a slave for Jesus' sake. Paul compares the proclaimer of Jesus Christ to a clay jar, what would today be known as unfired or green clay. Once the potter creates a vessel out of mud, it must dry before it can be fired in a kiln; if it is not thoroughly dry, the moisture in it will cause it to explode when heated. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are like unfired clay, a means for God's work to be announced throughout the world. God is the potter who made the clay jar. God gives the believer the extraordinary power to proclaim that Jesus died and was raised. The proclaimer, the clay jar, is always in the process of dying, but the good news will never fade away. Even now the life of Jesus is etched in the mortal flesh of the proclaimer, and, through his or her proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord, new life is stirred in the lives of the hearers.

Paul is adamant that Jesus be proclaimed as God's anointed one who is owed everyone's allegiance. He is master of the lives of those who believe that he died and God raised him from the dead. All who proclaim him are his slaves. Paul understands that God was at work in Jesus, the new Adam, and this work was revealed in the resurrection. Thus, God has made Jesus Christ Lord by raising him from the dead.

In a culture permeated with the proclamation of the self, Paul's words serve as an antidote. From birth children are taught to proclaim themselves to others through their ability to spell words correctly, their natural talent for sports, their display of artistic creations. After high school a person gets a job with a sheet of paper listing all his or her previous work experience. College students are told to put an experience they have had on their curriculum vitae because it will look good to graduate schools. In a world consumed by consumerism people are always in the process of selling themselves. Paul declares that the purpose of the Christian's mission involves no self-proclamation at all. The followers of Jesus proclaim him as Lord and themselves as his slaves.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: When have you most recently found yourself proclaiming yourself? When have you most recently found yourself declaring that Jesus Christ is Lord through your words and deeds?

PRAYER: Father of Jesus Christ, I am but a clay jar, created by you to make known the death and resurrection of your Son. Grant that my deeds may be animated by the extraordinary power of your Holy Spirit. Grant that my words may proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Justified by Faith

Saturday of the Fourth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law" (Gal 2:15-16).

REFLECTION: One of the basic tenets of Pauline thought is justification by faith in Jesus Christ. Addressing Jewish converts to Christianity, Paul reminds the Galatians that they are not justified by the 613 precepts of the Torah; if they could be so justified, then there would be no purpose for God's work in Jesus. Gentiles cannot be justified by the Torah because they are not Jews; therefore, they are justified through faith, like Jewish converts, in Jesus Christ. God's purpose in Jesus was to offer an example of one who accepted God's offer of grace, cooperated with God throughout his life—that is, lived his life in trust (faith) of God even to death on a cross—and, because of his faithfulness, was raised from the dead by God. Those who believe that Jesus was God's anointed (Christ) are justified by faith and not by doing the works of the Law.

Paul is dealing with what are usually called Judaizers, namely, those who want to return to the work of the Law known as circumcision. In Paul's day there were people who thought that a Gentile had to become a Jew before becoming a Christian. Paul, however, insisted that the purpose of the Law

had passed away with God's new work through Jesus. Paul did not want believers backsliding into the previous Jewish notion that a person could be saved through adherence to the Law. All a person can do is accept God's grace that enables a person to believe that God has saved him or her through trust in God. Jesus did not trust himself; he placed himself in God's hands and waited for God to save him by raising him from the dead.

A spirituality of mission should have abundant room for justification by faith. The purpose of mission is to awaken in others the fact that they cannot save themselves and to declare that God offers salvation to people. God offers himself to people so that they can respond to his offer of salvation. If a person responds to God's grace and believes that God made Jesus the model believer, the model truster of God, then the person has been saved by grace. No works are necessary; one must not become a Jew (through circumcision) before becoming a Christian. A lifestyle modeled on Jesus demonstrates that acceptance of God's gift. Nothing can be earned; all is grace.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What is your experience of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ? What is your experience of attempting to earn your salvation?

PRAYER: When all was lost, your love was so great that you came to the rescue of all people, mighty God, with the gift of yourself to justify humankind. Pour your saving grace upon me so that my life may be lived in imitation of him who lived and died for me, Jesus Christ, your Son, whom you raised from the dead and made Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Harvest

Metaphors

Fifth Sunday of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest' " (Matt 9:36-38).

REFLECTION: Three metaphors are used in the short passage above to communicate the truth that people are ready to be brought into God's kingdom. The first metaphor compares people to sheep. Sheep are very dumb animals; that is why they need some kind of shepherd—human, alpaca, dog—to help them stay together, find pasture, and locate water. If the reader thinks the metaphor is an insult to people, then he or she is correct! However, there is more insult contained in the metaphor; human shepherds were considered to be societal outcasts and unclean in Jesus' world. They pastured their sheep on other people's land, were physically dirty, and smelled of sheep.

The second metaphor employed by the Matthean Jesus is fruit. People are like fruit awaiting the harvesters. When fruit—apples, pears, peaches, strawberries, etc.—is ripe, it must be picked and stored in some way before it begins to rot. Otherwise, the point of planting and growing is wasted. So, the Matthean Jesus, through his words and deeds, has caused the human fruit to ripen; the disciples are given the

task of harvesting people for God's kingdom. In other words, people are ready to be picked.

The third metaphor used by the Matthean Jesus is that of laborer. A laborer is one who works for another. Seeing the overwhelming harvest awaiting attention, Jesus tells his disciples to pray that God will send more laborers to gather in the harvest for his kingdom. This laborer metaphor evokes the fishing metaphor at the beginning of the gospel; Jesus tells Peter and Andrew, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people" (Matt 4:19).

A spirituality of mission must include harvesting. It makes no difference what metaphor is used to describe it—sheep, fruit, laborer—because the results are the same. Once a follower of Jesus is called, listens and believes, leaves all, is commissioned, sent, freed from worry, and given a purpose, he or she has compassion on those who believe and harvests them for God's kingdom. No time can be wasted. If they are not shepherded, the people will wander away. If they are not picked while they are ripe, the people will deteriorate in the field. If additional laborers are not sought, the work of the kingdom will not be finished.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: In what ways are you like a sheep? Like fruit? Like a laborer?

PRAYER: Lord of the harvest, the yield of believers is plentiful, but the workers are few. In your mercy send more laborers among your people to guide them and to pick their plentiful fruit. Grant that I may be a worthy servant in your kingdom, where you live and reign with your Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

Weeds, Net, Judgment

Monday of the Fifth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "The slaves said to [their master], 'Then do you want us to go and gather [the weeds]?' But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn' " (Matt 13:28b-30).

REFLECTION: Unlike Mark, which groups together parables in one chapter, Matthew distributes them throughout the narrative. Three in particular concern the author's focus on the final judgment. First, in the parable of the wheat and the weeds, a master sows good wheat seed in his field, but his enemy follows him, sowing weeds. Both wheat and weeds sprout and begin to grow. When the weeds are noticed, one would expect the master to tell his slaves to pull them, but, instead, the master tells them to let all grow until harvest time, when he will separate them. The weeds will be burned; the wheat will be gathered. When Jesus interprets the parable for his disciples, he explains that he is the sower (word of God) of the good wheat seed (children of the kingdom) in the field (world) and the enemy who sowed weeds is the devil. "[T]he harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels" (Matt 13:39). At the end of the age, he will collect evildoers and burn them, and he will collect the righteous into his Father's kingdom.

Second, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to "a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind;

when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous" (Matt 13:47-49).

Jesus's third last judgment parable employs sheep and goats. The Son of Man separates people like a shepherd separates sheep and goats after bringing them in from the pasture. The sheep are placed on the right, the side of righteousness, and the goats are placed on the left, the side of the accursed. The sole criterion for judgment is doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do; that criterion is illustrated in many ways: feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, and so on. Those who have done these things are harvested for God's kingdom; those who failed to do so are sent to eternal fire (Matt 25:31-46).

According to Matthew's gospel, Jesus will judge his followers. They are not to judge each other—the wheat and the weeds must grow together. The righteous will be harvested into God's kingdom like wheat into a barn, like what is good from a dragnet, like sheep guided into a pen. The unrighteous, however, will be removed from his sight, like weeds, a dragnet's refuse, and goats. A spirituality of mission includes judgment by the one who called and sent the disciple on his or her mission of success.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: If the Son of Man returned today, would you be judged wheat or weeds, good or bad, sheep or goat?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus Christ, you call me to proclaim the nearness of your Father's kingdom. Bless my words that many who hear them may become worthy of the harvest when you return to gather the righteous. Count me among those worthy of eternal life with you, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

Ripe Field

Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "Jesus said to [his disciples], 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, "Four months more, then comes the harvest"? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, "One sows and another reaps." I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor' " (John 4:34-38).

REFLECTION: Jesus comes to Jacob's well, which is not only a place to drop a bucket, but a sacred spot of encounter between God and people. The writer mentions that it is noon, when everyone was eating lunch and taking a nap except for the Samaritan woman. In order not to be criticized by the other women who came to the well to get water early in the morning, she waits until the heat of the day. Jesus ignores the taboos dictating that he, a Jew, may not speak to a Samaritan, a person of mixed blood and that he, as a man, should not speak to a woman. He enters into a dialogue that carefully leads her to faith. She leaves her water jar, a sign, at the well—because she has drunk deeply of a different kind of water, eternal life—and goes into her village to tell others about the Messiah who has found her. "Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony . . . They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we

believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world'" (John 4:39a, 42).

Jesus' disciples had gone off to buy food. When they try to get him to eat some of the provisions they have procured, he tells them he has eaten of the Samaritan woman's faith. Then, he points to the crowd (the harvest, that is) moving toward them. Now the disciples must reap the fruit that they did not plant.

Those of us on a spirituality of mission may never know those who did the initial evangelizing, but we know that our food is to do the will of God by completing his work. A chance encounter at the airport between two people may have planted the seed in one person. It is only later that others reap the benefits. Pastors regularly reap a harvest that they did not plant. One college student impresses his or her roommate by getting up early on Sunday morning and going to worship with others. After some discussion, the devoted student brings the new believer to the leaders of the church who reap what they did not sow. In a spirituality of mission there is room to see that the fields are ripe for harvesting what others have sown, even while being aware that others may reap what the reader has sown.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What have you reaped that others have sown? What have others reaped that you have sown?

PRAYER: Father, my food is to do your will by completing your work of evangelization. Make me a good sower in the fields of your world so that they may become ripe for harvesting. Make me a good harvester in the fields of your world that others have planted. Then, sower and reaper may rejoice together in gathering fruit for eternal life. I ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Righteousness

Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "I [Paul] thank my God every time I remember you [Philippians], constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. . . . And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God" (Phil 1:3-6, 9-11).

REFLECTION: In the thanksgiving section of his letter to the Philippians, Paul looks toward the end of time when Jesus Christ will return to the earth in glory. That day, whenever it occurs, will be the time for the harvest of righteousness, namely, the ingathering of all those who developed a healthy relationship with God as they waited for Christ's return. Paul is overjoyed that the Philippians, who accepted his gospel that Jesus died and was raised, have not abandoned their faith. Furthermore, Paul is confident that God will keep the process going until the day Christ returns, when he will bring it to completion and gather the "harvest of righteousness."

Paul prays that the Philippians' genuine love, that is, self-sacrifice, for each other will lead them to deep insight in order to know what is really important and best for each other while they await Christ's return in glory. A husband who self-sacrifices

himself for his wife because he genuinely loves her will reflect upon his experience of marriage and know what he needs to do for his beloved, even if it means denying himself something. Likewise, a wife, reflecting on her marriage and learning from her reflection what is best for her husband, will do the right thing, even if it means self-sacrifice, for the good of her marriage. One friend, who genuinely loves another friend, will deny himself or herself in order to do what is best for the other.

A healthy spirituality of mission enables people to do the right thing for others. Genuine love overflows with knowledge and insight as to what is best for another—a spouse, a friend, a coworker, a classmate, etc.—in order to be pure and blameless, having produced a harvest of righteousness. In the words of Paul in his letter to the Romans, believers should "[l]et love be genuine"; they should "love one another with mutual affection"; and they should "outdo one another in showing honor" (Rom 12:10). If each person did this, then each person would be placed ahead of everyone else, creating a community of believers who spur each other toward a harvest of righteousness when Christ returns in glory.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: If Christ were to return in glory today, what would be the harvest he would gather from you?

PRAYER: Thank you, God, for the gospel of your Son. I am confident that the good work you have begun in me will be brought to completion on the day when Christ returns in glory. Grant that my love may overflow with knowledge and insight to determine what is best, that I may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Reap

Thursday of the Fifth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "Then I [John] looked, and there was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like the Son of Man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand! Another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to the one who sat on the cloud, 'Use your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.' So the one who sat on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped" (Rev 14:14-16).

REFLECTION: The white cloud, borrowed from the book of Daniel (7:13), had become standard code for the final judgment by the time the book of Revelation was written late in the first century. The Son of Man appeared to John of Patmos earlier in the book (1:12-16), where his description is borrowed from the book of Daniel and melded with characteristics of other prophets. Later the Son of Man is presented as "a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered" (5:6). And he appears again as a rider on a white horse who "judges and makes war" (19:11). Through his death and resurrection, the Son of Man has gained the right to reap those who have remained faithful to him during trying times of chaos and persecution. A few verses later he will reap those who have faltered, and they will be put in the winepress of God's wrath (14:17-20).

The book of Revelation belongs to what is called apocalyptic literature, a genre of writing that flourished from the second century BCE through the second century CE. It uses various symbols to describe what will happen to those who have fol-

lowed the Lamb—and those who have abandoned him. The purpose of apocalyptic literature is to give hope to people during times of crisis and persecution. Some aspect of one's world is ending—such as a relationship through the death of a spouse, the end of a semester for a college student, or protest and leaving a church because of its teaching. In order to keep believers from falling into despair, the author urges his readers to remain true to their mission so that they may be harvested by the risen Christ into the heavenly realm.

Hope is needed in a spirituality of mission. A person who has left all to answer God's call and been commissioned, sent, and given a purpose for his or her mission will often encounter crisis or persecution. Automobile accidents, floods, and the sudden death of a family member create crisis situations. Persecution may involve having a door slammed in one's face, workplace shunning because of delivering God's word, or even honking from drivers because of one's bumper sticker identifying a person as a Christian. The book of Revelation offers the reader hope that God will one day intervene in human history, and the Son of Man will reap the harvest of those who have remained faithful.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: In what specific ways have you experienced hope in the midst of crisis, chaos, or persecution?

PRAYER: Ever-living God, who offers hope to your faithful people during times of crisis, chaos, and persecution, send the Son of Man on a cloud of glory to reap the fully ripe harvest. Grant that I may be counted worthy to be gathered into the kingdom where you live with your Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Fearless Evangelizing

Not Ashamed

Friday of the Fifth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "For I [Paul] am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith' " (Rom 1:16-17).

REFLECTION: Paul's basic theological position is summed up above. The person who lives by faith, that is, absolute trust of God, is declared righteous, that is, in a healthy relationship with God, by God. Paul didn't create this idea; he got it from the prophet Habakkuk (2:4). In Pauline thought, Jesus is the model of the righteous person. Jesus died in trust of God, and God raised him from the dead. Thus, Jesus was righteous and became a model of righteousness for both Jew and Gentile (Greek). What had previously been earned through obedience to the Torah (Law) for Jews, namely, salvation, has now been offered as a free gift, namely, grace, to everyone, if one responds to grace with faith, that is, trust of God, like Jesus.

Paul tells the Romans that he is not ashamed of this good news. God validated his work in Jesus by raising him from the dead. The enmity that existed between people and God before Jesus has been removed. And God has proved himself to be reliable and trustworthy. Thus, Jesus represents the means (through faith) to a healthy relationship with God and the result of a healthy relationship with God (for faith). What had once been the means of salvation, namely, the Torah (Law) for

Jews, has now been replaced by the example of Christ Jesus for Jews and Gentiles.

There is no room for being ashamed in a spirituality of mission. The gospel, according to Paul, is simple: Jesus died while remaining faithful to his relationship with God, and God raised him from the dead. Jesus is the model of the new creation that God has begun for Jew and Gentile. The relationship God had (has) with Jesus Christ is the type of relationship he wants to have with every human being. Furthermore, because he knows that people are not able to make the first move toward a relationship with him, God makes the first move by offering grace, himself, to people, so that they have the ability to respond to God. The person who is not ashamed willingly accepts God's offer by responding to him and tells others of this salvation offered to all by God, just like Paul did.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What is your experience of accepting God's grace in order to enter deeper and deeper into relationship with him?

PRAYER: All-powerful God, you offer salvation to everyone who has faith. Pour your grace upon me so that I may enter more deeply into a relationship that is right with you. Through the example of your Son, Jesus Christ, keep me faithful. I ask this through the same Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit are one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Basic Message

Saturday of the Fifth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "I [Paul] handed on to you [Corinthians] as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures. . . . I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain" (1 Cor 15:3-4, 9-10a).

REFLECTION: Out of a solid spirituality of mission a person delivers the basic message, what Paul refers to as the gospel. As he indicates in his First Letter to the Corinthians, that gospel has three aspects. The first is that Christ died for sins. What Paul means by this is that Jesus' life was a sacrifice offered to God, who accepted it by removing people's failings and offering them the grace that reconciles them to God. Paul experienced God's grace in his encounter with the risen Christ. And that grace not only removed his sin of attempting to wipe out Christianity, but it made him a messenger of that graceful justification to others.

The second aspect of Paul's gospel is that after Jesus died he was buried. Jesus, the Son of God, had to be human and die. He had to be human in order to show all other humans how to accept God's grace and live in a healthy relationship with God through good times and through bad times. Paul often refers to Jesus as the new Adam; Jesus cooperated with God, unlike the first Adam, and died. However, God raised

him from the dead on the third day. This third aspect of Paul's gospel is one of those mighty deeds of God. Not only does God manifest his power by raising Jesus from the dead, but he also validates the work of Jesus. He puts his stamp of approval on the life that Jesus led. Thus, Jesus becomes the model for believers to imitate. If they do so, they have the hope that God will do for them what he did for Christ.

The grace of God, God's act of sharing himself with people, changes people. It enabled Jesus to go willingly to his death on a cross in the hope that God would raise him to new life. It enabled Paul, one of the best persecutors of the church, to become a missionary of the very movement he had once attempted to destroy. The grace of God continues to be offered to people today; if it is accepted, it transforms those who welcome it. It makes them fearless evangelizers of the basic message that Jesus died for sins, that he was buried, and that he was raised from the dead by God.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What do you consider to be the basic message of Christianity? Are Paul's three aspects contained in your outline of evangelization?

PRAYER: Ever-living God, with your grace you kept your Son faithful to the mission of saving the world that you had entrusted to him. Keep me faithful in proclaiming Jesus Christ as the redeemer of the world, and grant that after death I may share in his resurrection. He is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Walk by Faith

Sixth Sunday of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him" (2 Cor 5:6-9).

REFLECTION: Paul writes about the body as an earthly tent in his Second Letter to the Corinthians. The earthly tent is mortal; it is like the clothes people wear. However, while in the earthly tent, people groan, that is, they yearn for completion, when the earthly tent will die and they will enter into a house not made by human hands, "eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor 5:1). The stress that is engendered by being in an earthly tent but desiring a heavenly home could lead people to despair. However, Paul prefers that those who believe that Jesus died and God raised him remain confident, that is, full of faith, full of conviction, full of certainty that what God did for Jesus he will do for all who continue to walk by faith.

Walking by faith is a way of life in the midst of the stress of being in an earthy tent and desiring a heavenly home. In other words, walking by faith means that people see differently; they have a vision of the resurrected life that is to follow death, the destruction of the earthly tent. This lifestyle both dictates what they do and don't do, and it demonstrates faith to others. By their moral lives people reveal or preach without saying a word the faith in which they stand. Thus, no matter if they

are in a bodily tent or in a heavenly home, they bear witness to their faith that Jesus died and God raised him from the dead.

Several modern examples may help people understand this important aspect of a spirituality of mission. Many contemporary people tell others what they know they want to hear in order to avoid conflict; then they proceed to engage in whatever behavior they want. Their outer words do not match their inner dispositions. There is no vision inside that is directing outward behavior. Students tell their teachers whatever they think the teachers want to hear, even if what they say is not even close to the truth. Drivers tell police officers whatever they think will keep them from getting a ticket, even if it is not even close to the truth. Employees tell employers what they want to hear about the product they manufacture, even if they wouldn't buy the item themselves. There is no basic way of life, vision, purpose, that dictates what one says or does. Consequently, there is no change to which people look forward in the future. Those who walk by faith are evangelizers who speak the truth in every situation because they know that they are living in a temporary tent and one day through death will enter a heavenly home.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What stress do you experience being in an earthly tent but desiring a heavenly home? How does that stress assist you in walking through life by faith?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus Christ, you bestow confidence upon those who at home in the body are away from their heavenly home. Grant that I may walk by faith, not by sight, and please you until I arrive in the kingdom, where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit in eternal Trinity, forever and ever. Amen.

No Other Gospel

Monday of the Sixth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "I [Paul] am astonished that you [Galatians] are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. . . . As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!" (Gal 1:6-9).

REFLECTION: Paul has a problem in the churches in Galatia. There is a group advocating that Gentile Christians observe the Torah, which Paul insists has been surpassed by the death and resurrection of Christ. For him the works of the Torah, primarily circumcision, are no longer necessary; a person cannot earn salvation by doing them. Salvation is a free gift (grace) from God. The model of how to accept and then live according to God's grace is Jesus. In him, the new Adam, God started over. Both Jews and Gentiles have been offered grace by God, who waits for them to respond. And when they do, he declares them justified. Those Galatians who want to observe the Law are perverting the good news that Paul has delivered to them. He fears that they will fall back into the old pattern of earning salvation by works instead of continuing forward in the new pattern of justification by grace through faith in Christ.

Paul's good news is simple: Jesus died, and was raised. God saved him not because of his adherence to all 613 laws of the Torah, but because of his faithfulness to his Father's

grace. Works, as dictated by the Law, especially circumcision, are not the means to salvation. If they exist—and in Paul it is not necessary that they do—they are present as a result of accepting the grace of God. Works flow out of a lifestyle of cooperation with God, just like Jesus' work of redemption flowed out of his relationship with God. What God did for Christ, God promises to do for Christ's followers.

A spirituality of mission must remain faithful to the basic good news. We make salvation difficult by proposing a new gospel created from fragments of those found in the New Testament and declaring it to be doctrine. But evangelization is best presented in its plurality. A spirituality of mission must have enough room for Paul, Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, James, Peter, and more. In other words, the New Testament preserves the diversity of Christianity. Thus, instead of attempting to make another person believe the way the missioner does, the evangelizer should advocate for *Christianities* as represented by the various biblical books. What unites all of them is the basic Pauline gospel: Jesus died, and was raised.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What gospel do you proclaim? How does your favorite New Testament book bias your faith?

PRAYER: Because of his faithfulness to your grace, Almighty God, you raised Jesus from the dead and validated him as your Son. Keep me faithful to proclaiming his death and resurrection that I may come to share eternal life in the kingdom where he lives with you and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

Run the Race

Tuesday of the Sixth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:1-2).

REFLECTION: The letter to the Hebrews is one of those New Testament (Christian Bible) documents that is misidentified. It is best thought of as an exhortation or sermon given to Jewish Christians in exile after the fall of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 CE. After explaining that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (11:1), the author provides a lengthy list of Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) characters who illustrate his definition. He refers to these characters as a great cloud of witnesses, and he exhorts his readers to remove from their lives whatever it is that keeps them from running the Christian race with perseverance, particularly the ruined city of Jerusalem and the destroyed temple.

Jesus is the model; he is the pioneer and perfecter of faith. He accepted God's word and lived according to it, even dying in shame on the cross. Capital punishment Roman style—crucifixion—was considered by the Jews a shameful way to die. The crucified man was shamed because he was nailed to the wood naked, and nakedness of any kind shamed a man

in the Jewish world of the first century. Furthermore, the book of Deuteronomy makes clear, "anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse" (21:23). Jesus despised the shame and curse of the cross, and God vindicated him by raising him and seating him at his right hand, the place of power. Those who follow Jesus must continue to run their race, using Jesus as their example, "so that [they] may not grow weary or lose heart" (Heb 12:3).

For those running the race of mission, their spirituality needs to be informed and supported by Jesus. He is a pioneer, one who opened a new method. This new method is running the race through suffering and death, all the while trusting the promise of God, namely, that there will be more joy on the other side of death in the resurrection than one can only begin to imagine here and now. Denying himself the experience of joy here and now, Jesus perfected faith, ignoring shame, ignoring suffering, ignoring death. He was right; God raised him to new life and seated him on his right before the cloud of witnesses that went before him. In a world of immediate gratification, Jesus becomes the model of a spirituality of mission that includes self-denial during the race for the sake of something greater, more joyful, later.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: While you run the race, what have you denied yourself in hope of what lies ahead?

PRAYER: You have surrounded me with a great cloud of witnesses who placed their faith and hope in you, Lord God. Keep my eyes focused on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, so that I may run with perseverance the race that you have set before me. Grant that I may one day share with him the joy of the resurrection. I ask this through the same Christ, my Lord. Amen.

10

WITNESSING

Peter Bears Witness

Wednesday of the Sixth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to [Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family], 'Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this [lame] man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is

"the stone that was rejected by you, the builders;
it has become the cornerstone."

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved'" (Acts 4:8-12).

REFLECTION: The Peter who denies knowing Jesus to his face in Luke (22:54-62) suddenly bears witness to the cure of the lame man in the Acts of the Apostles. Both Luke and the Acts are written by the same author, who, if there was not some historical background to Peter's denial would have, undoubtedly, removed that scene from the gospel in order to add more credibility to this one of his two major characters in the Acts (Paul is the other). Peter's ability to bear witness comes from the Holy Spirit, who empowers those who follow Jesus to witness to his resurrection. Standing before the power structure of the leadership of the Jews, Peter declares that the very person they thought couldn't be God's messenger is the savior of the world.

The more than forty-year-old man, who had been lame from birth (Acts 3:2; 4:22), has been restored physically, socially, and spiritually through the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, pronounced by Peter. His inability to walk has been removed. He has been able to assume a place in society now that his lameness is removed. And by faith in the name of Jesus he has received spiritual well-being. Thus, the once lame man is also a witness. Peter states, "the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all" (Acts 3:16b).

The Greek word "martyr" translated into English becomes "witness." It refers to a person who is willing to sacrifice everything—even life—to attest to truth. The fearful Peter becomes the fearless Peter through the Holy Spirit. The outcast lame man becomes the restored man through the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. In both cases, the work of God is being done. A spirituality of mission must include witnessing, even in the face of death. A fearless witness attests to a truth and stands back and watches as God works. In Peter's case, the rulers and elders could do nothing to him (Acts 4:13-22), who continued to speak about what he had seen and heard.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: When have you been a fearless witness to truth?

PRAYER: God of Peter, after you raised your Son from the dead, you gave your Holy Spirit to his disciples to enable them to proclaim in his name the healing you poured upon the world. Fill me with that same Holy Spirit so that I may be a fearless witness to your truth. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Unstoppable Mission

Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "Then the high priest took action; he and all who were with him (that is, the sect of the Sadducees), being filled with jealousy, arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out, and said, 'Go, stand in the temple and tell the people the whole message about this life.' When they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and went on with their teaching" (Acts 5:17-21a).

REFLECTION: If the mission comes from God, it cannot be stopped. A spirituality of mission recognizes this, just as the reader of the Acts of the Apostles recognizes it. Nothing can stop what God wants accomplished. If authority gets in the way, God sends a messenger to move things (Acts 12:6-11; 16:26-31) so that his message about a new way of life can be heard. The place where the message that Jesus is the Messiah is best heard is the temple, the religious meeting place for Jews. Even though the apostles were arrested while teaching at the temple, God sends them back there to teach more.

Authority is often threatened by what is new, and the response is jealousy, rivalry. The author of Luke and the Acts declares that the Sadducees support the actions of the high priest. However, there is more to this narrative. The Sadducees represent temple worship according to the Torah. Furthermore, they politically align themselves with the Roman government in their attempt to keep control of the temple. And most importantly, they deny the resurrection of the dead—the very

heart of the proclamation concerning Jesus of Nazareth. In other words, they represent the power structure of their time. When resurrection is preached to them, the Sadducees revert to jealousy. But they are no match for the angel of the Lord!

Those engaged in mission, like the apostles, are always meeting power structures. Almost every church contains one or more; they may be committees who control the finances or who hire and fire the employees. If someone proposes something new, jealousy keeps them from even listening to the idea. Missioners come face to face with ministers, who, rather than hearing the word of God, spring into jealousy and attempt to put out the fire of the message before it bursts into flame. Nothing is better in the face of rivalry than the way something has always been done! And there are those members of churches who manipulate with jealousy when a new teaching begins. These folks refuse to move closer to the front because they have sat in a particular pew all their lives. They don't like the renovation or building plans so they campaign secretly to have them redrawn. They begin rumors that destroy the good name of those proposing the new teaching. Such are the power structures where witnessing seems to stop; however, God's mission will be accomplished—even if he has to send an angel of the Lord to open the prison doors of closed minds.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: Most recently, when and how have you borne witness to the truth in the face of power?

PRAYER: Almighty God, you permit nothing to stop the spread of the good news of the resurrection. Send your angel to me to give me the courage to witness in word and deed to the life of Jesus Christ, who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Living Message

Friday of the Sixth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "When [the leaders of the Jews] heard [the things about which Stephen spoke], they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him . . . While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died" (Acts 7:54-60).

REFLECTION: A person who has a well-developed spirituality of mission is a living message or a living gospel. In the Acts of the Apostles, Stephen is presented as such a person. One of seven men chosen by the apostles to assist in the daily distribution of food to widows, he is described in Acts as "a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (6:5) and "full of grace and power" (6:8). Stephen's opponents could not "withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke" (6:10). After he is accused falsely, like Jesus, Stephen presents his witness through a summary of God's acts in history (7:1-53)—a witness that leads to his death.

Stephen's death is modeled on Jesus' death. While he is being stoned by the crowd for the living message he has just

delivered, he prays, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59), just like Jesus in Luke's gospel had prayed, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (23:46). Furthermore, Stephen, who sees "the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56), prays, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60), again recalling Jesus' words (Luke 23:34). Both in his life and in his death Stephen is an icon of Jesus to whom he gives living witness.

Modern evangelizers must witness through their living messages. All too often, life is separated from message. The old proverb about what a person does shouts so loud another cannot hear what he or she is saying applies here. A missioner cannot say one thing and do something else. There must be a unity of witness between words and deeds, like Stephen, and modeled on Jesus. One who is pro-life cannot also support the death penalty. One who helps to enact stiffer penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs cannot be found driving under such influence. In other words, for the missionary Stephen models the unity between words and deeds, and that is why he is a living message.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: Identify three specific ways that you are a living message.

PRAYER: Father, you filled Stephen with the Holy Spirit so that he might announce the gospel of your Son through his words and deeds. Fill me with the same Holy Spirit so that I may be a living message in the hope of one day seeing your glory and Jesus Christ standing at your right hand. You are one God forever and ever. Amen.

Philip Interprets Scripture

Saturday of the Sixth Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "The eunuch [a court official of Candace, queen of Ethiopia] asked Philip, 'About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet [Isaiah] say this [Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth], about himself or about someone else?' Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?' He commanded the chariot to stop, . . . and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:34-39).

REFLECTION: Another aspect of a spirituality of mission is witness through the interpretation of Scripture. Philip is the model for this. After being prompted by an angel of the Lord to meet the chariot carrying the Ethiopian eunuch, Philip discovers him reading from a scroll the words of the prophet Isaiah (53:7-8) from one of the suffering servant songs that describe the fate of Israel as God's servant for remaining committed to the task. Philip bears witness by telling the eunuch that the passage describes Jesus. The eunuch's question opens for Philip the possibility for catechesis, and he makes the most of it. After accepting Philip's witness, the eunuch is baptized, and Philip is removed from the scene like others before him.

This catechesis or interpretation of Scripture by Philip is the work of the Holy Spirit, who is the principal motivator of witnessing in both Luke's gospel and his second volume, the Acts of the Apostles. The Spirit instructs Philip to approach the eunuch's chariot. The Spirit inspires Philip's interpretation of Isaiah. Once he has finished his interpretative mission, the Spirit snatches Philip away and sends him on the next stage of his mission. As far as the author is concerned, the Acts of the Apostles represents the age of the Holy Spirit, the wind, air, breath of God that guides the church.

A good spirituality of mission acknowledges that it is the Holy Spirit who gets believers to where he wants them, fills them with words to be interpreted or spoken, and then moves them on when the encounter is finished. This understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit demands openness on the part of believers. Philip had to remain open to joining the eunuch's chariot and interpreting the prophet Isaiah. Likewise, modern believers must remain open to encounters in the grocery store, on the sidewalk, on vacation, on an airplane. One does not know when the Spirit will prompt interpretation. The cue is the question. Once the eunuch asked Philip about Isaiah, Philip knew it was time for him to witness.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: Most recently, where and when have you been prompted by the Holy Spirit to be witness to Jesus through some type of interpretation?

PRAYER: Come, Holy Spirit. Guide my steps to those to whom you send me. Fill my mouth with the words you desire I speak. Grant that I may always witness to words and deeds of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Father in perfect Trinity, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Giving Life

Seventh Sunday of Easter (Ascension)

SCRIPTURE: "About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival of Unleavened Bread.) When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. While Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him" (Acts 12:1-5).

REFLECTION: James, one of the twelve apostles, was killed by Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great, who killed John the Baptist. The narrator of the Acts of the Apostles tells the reader that the Jews were pleased by Herod Agrippa I's action, and, of course, in politics if one does anything that pleases others, then it is smart to repeat the act. Thus, Peter was arrested and put in prison to face death. So, the power of Herod Agrippa I is pitted against the power of God, as the church prays fervently for Peter. And God hears the church's prayer. An angel of the Lord leads Peter out of prison to those who have been praying for him and then to safety (Acts 12:6-19).

It is important to note that James gives his life at the time of the Passover, when the Jews celebrated the death of the firstborn Egyptians and their escape from slavery. For the members of the church, Passover also marked the time of the death of Jesus, who gave his life for the world. Thus, James's death at Passover is a model of how one gives his life in imita-

tion of Jesus. Being willing to give one's life is another aspect of a spirituality of mission.

While giving one's life may mean death, oftentimes it means sacrificing what a person wants for a greater good. For example, a person can give his life to coaching a team instead of sleeping in on Saturday morning. A person can give her life by serving as a Girl Scout leader instead of going shopping. Any kind of volunteering to help others involves giving up something in order to do the volunteer work. However, as those who already give their lives can narrate, the rewards are overwhelming. And one's willingness to give his or her life enhances a person's spirituality of mission.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: In what specific ways do you give away your life to others?

PRAYER: God of James and Peter, you accepted the sacrifice of the lives of your apostles in witness to the life and teaching of your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant me the grace to give my life in service to your people. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Cost of Discipleship

Deny Self

Monday of the Seventh Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "[Jesus] called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it' " (Mark 8:34-35).

REFLECTION: A spirituality of mission that does not examine the cost of discipleship has deceived itself. Following Jesus costs disciples themselves. Therefore, the first thing potential followers must do is know themselves so they know exactly what they are going to deny. The Markan Jesus makes denying self a prerequisite of discipleship. The author of Matthew's gospel portrays Jesus stating the same thing (16:24), as does the author of Luke's gospel (9:23). Until a person can know and deny the self, he or she cannot keep it out of the way of discipleship. Denying self is the ability to set aside one's own wishes, needs, interests, or desires in order to take care of the wishes, needs, interests, or desires of another.

The epitome of denying self is the cross. That is why the Markan Jesus tells his potential followers that after they deny themselves they take up the cross. Then, no matter what comes their way, they are able to continue through life. For the intended readers of Mark's gospel, persecution was coming their way in terms of ostracism, economics, and even death. The author is telling his readers to walk in the footsteps of

Jesus, who gave his life for the gospel with the cross, but had it saved by being raised from the dead.

One cost of discipleship that must be factored into a spirituality of mission is that of denial of self. Most people are raised in a culture of immediate gratification. If one wants a new pair of shoes, he or she goes to the department store and buys them. If one wants pizza for dinner, he or she can call for immediate delivery, go to the pizza restaurant, or pick up one at the grocery store and enjoy it within the hour. Small children learn quickly that their every desire will be met if they cry, scream, or throw a tantrum. There is no waiting in a non-self-denying culture. And yet Jesus makes it clear that the denial of self is a prerequisite to lay claim to being one of his followers.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: In the past twenty-four hours, how have you practiced denial of self? What cross did you take up to follow Jesus?

PRAYER: Father of Jesus, your only-begotten Son taught his followers to deny themselves and take up their cross in order to follow him. Give me the strength to practice self-denial so that I may learn how to carry the cross as a disciple of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you forever and ever. Amen.

Division

Tuesday of the Seventh Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: Jesus said to his disciples, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it" (Matt 10:34-39).

REFLECTION: Another cost of discipleship is family division. According to the Matthean Jesus, those who place family members ahead of him are not worthy of him. He demands total commitment, and that allegiance divides fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, and others. In other words, being a follower of Jesus does not bring peace; it brings a sword of division. A son disagrees with his father about some behavior, and their relationship is divided. A daughter disagrees with her mother about appropriate public dress, and their relationship is fractured. Words about religion, politics, race, etc. are exchanged among in-laws, and relationships are broken.

Taking up the cross further divides people. Why? Because carrying the cross of disease, economics, faith, etc. means that

a person does not do what others think he or she should be doing. In the popular mindset, every disease is to be fought, but the one carrying its cross may decide to submit. Those who are economically suffering are supposed to find a job, but the one carrying the cross may submit by selling everything to live simply. And the cross of faith, that is, submission to God, may be the last thing anyone wants to carry; it leaves one bruised and battered.

In a culture that idolizes family—husband, wife, and two children—Jesus' words sting. According to the Matthean Jesus, life is not found in saving it in family; life is found by throwing it away. There can be no clinging to anything or anyone. Those who learn this truth know that a spirituality of mission costs division in one's family. It leaves people separated. In a culture that often values family above all else, this can be a difficult cost to pay.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What division exists in your family as a result of discipleship?

PRAYER: Almighty Father, your Son did not bring peace to the earth, but brought division with the sword of his teaching, making one's foes the members of his or her own household. Grant me the grace to love Jesus Christ above all and to take up my cross and follow him so that I may be worthy of him and lose my life for his sake in order to find it. I ask this through the same Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Count the Cost

Wednesday of the Seventh Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? . . . Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? . . . So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions" (Luke 14:26-33).

REFLECTION: The author of Luke's gospel portrays Jesus as stating that a follower must hate all family ties along with his or her own life. These strong words are delivered to the crowd in order to emphasize the all-or-nothing position of the Lukan Jesus. His emphasis on turning one's back on family and life weeds out those who cannot make such an absolute commitment. If one cannot abandon one's family, then how can a person pick up his or her cross and walk in Jesus' footsteps?

Unique to Luke's gospel are two examples of counting the cost of discipleship. The first example employs the building metaphor. Before a person decides to turn his or her back on family and life, he or she should calculate the cost, like a builder, who goes to the hardware store and calculates the cost of materials, the cost of labor, and adds in a few more

dollars for unforeseen expenses. Then, once the builder has an estimated cost, he can decide if he has enough money to begin and finish the project. The other metaphor is war. One nation preparing to fight another must first consider the troops it has and the troops its enemy has. If it has few troops, it may be best to negotiate peace. In either case—building or war—the cost must be calculated; otherwise, people will see the failure and ridicule those who miscalculated.

To the hating family members and carrying the cross—carefully calculated—the author of Luke's gospel adds one of his favorite themes, namely, giving up possessions. Throughout Luke's gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, volume two, the author emphasizes the importance of renouncing possessions in narratives, parables, and sayings. Possessions must be renounced because contrary to popular understanding possessions are not possessed by people; possessions possess people. And anyone who wants to follow Jesus must be free of them—and of family—in order to take up the cross—the cost of discipleship—and follow Jesus. Before embarking upon such a mission, however, one must calculate the cost and be sure that he or she is able to pay the price. If not, others may be scandalized by those who should be sincere disciples.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What has discipleship cost you in terms of family, cross, and possessions? Have you calculated the cost?

PRAYER: I come to you, Father, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Help me to calculate the cost of following in the footsteps of your Son, Jesus Christ, and give me the grace to give away whatever discipleship will ask of me. I ask this in the name of the same Jesus Christ, who, hating his life, carried his cross to his death. He is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Cross

Thursday of the Seventh Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor 1:18, 20-25).

REFLECTION: According to Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians, Jews need signs in order to believe; the reason they need signs is because throughout their history, God gave them signs, such as crossing the Red Sea, manna from heaven, and so forth. Greeks or Gentiles need wisdom; the reason they need wisdom is because they gave the world philosophers, such as Aristotle and Plato who taught the depths of truth about life. So, according to Paul, the cross of Jesus becomes a stumbling block to Jews, because crucifixion was considered the most shameful way to die, plus the crucified man was considered cursed by God (Deut 21:23). Jesus is also a stum-

bling block to Gentiles because his death was foolishness; a wise man should be honored, not crucified.

God has removed the need for signs, however, subverting the wisdom of the world. In other words, God has done something new. From God's point of view, according to Paul, the cross is the new sign and the new wisdom of God. It is a sign of the union of God and people. It is the wisdom of God, who does not do things the way people do things. If one, like the Jews, thinks that the cross is weakness, then God's weakness is stronger than human strength. If one, like the Gentiles, thinks that the cross is foolishness, then God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. In both cases, God has displayed his power and wisdom through the cross of his Son.

Repeatedly in the gospels, as noted above, Jesus tells his followers to take up the cross and follow him. While they may look weak and foolish in the eyes of the world, they look strong and wise in God's eyes. In a culture that has turned the cross into just another piece of jewelry, which may or may not identify its wearer as a Christian, a spirituality of mission places it in the center of the life of a follower of Jesus. It represents the cost of discipleship, the cost a follower is willing to pay in terms of being seen as weak and foolish.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: What weakness has the cross cost you? What foolishness has the cross cost you?

PRAYER: God of Jesus, you displayed your strength and wisdom on the cross. Help me embrace this stumbling block and learn its wisdom so that I may be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, who lives and reigns with you and Jesus Christ, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Suffering

Friday of the Seventh Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you. . . . Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name. . . . Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good" (1 Pet 4:12-14, 16, 19).

REFLECTION: Just reading the word "suffering" is enough to repel most people. "Suffering" bears a negative connotation; no one wants to suffer. And yet there is a message about good suffering in the First Letter of Peter. Not only does the anonymous author write about good suffering, but he urges his readers to rejoice in suffering. He does this because he understands that when Christians suffer in any way, they are sharing in the sufferings of Christ. Thus when some kind of fiery ordeal comes their way, Christians see it as an opportunity to display their faithfulness and rejoice in their suffering.

Good suffering serves the Christian well for several reasons. First, just like Jesus' suffering gave glory to God, the suffering of Christians gives glory to God, that is, it praises God's wisdom and power. Second, those who are reviled for bearing

the name of Christian will be blessed when Christ returns in glory. Third, those who profess Jesus' name are held to a higher standard than nonbelievers, according to this letter. They honor God with even more trust as they go from one good suffering experience to the next. Fourth, good suffering is a sign that the Holy Spirit is resting upon the believer, strengthening him or her to bear good suffering in imitation of the one he or she follows.

A spirituality of mission understands that one cost of discipleship is suffering. However, it is not a negative suffering, as the culture proposes that all suffering is and must be eradicated as quickly as possible with drugs, surgery, or psychological treatment. In a spirituality of mission, one views suffering as good, as a small price to pay to be a follower of Jesus. Anyone who is reviled in any way for bearing the name of Christ, that is, being known as a Christian, also knows that he or she is blessed, because the Spirit of God is resting upon him or her.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: In what ways have you experienced good suffering? What blessings were disclosed to you?

PRAYER: Blessed are you, O God, for you send fiery ordeals to test those who follow your Son, Jesus Christ. Send the Holy Spirit to rest upon me when I share in Christ's sufferings, that I may glorify you because I bear his name. I entrust myself to you, the faithful Creator, who enables me to do good and to praise you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

12

Calling Others

Lamb of God

Saturday of the Seventh Week of Easter

SCRIPTURE: "The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. . . . One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter)" (John 1:35-37, 40-42).

REFLECTION: After Andrew hears John the Baptist declare Jesus to be the Lamb of God, he immediately answers the call. Then, he goes to get his brother, Simon Peter. This is a pattern in John's gospel: Answer the call, go get another person, bring him or her to Jesus, and get out of the way. All John the Baptist has to do is announce the presence of the Messiah (God's Anointed) to two of his disciples; then John gets out of the way. One of them, Andrew, responds with the same faith by proclaiming the Lamb of God to Simon, who, in turn, responds by going to Jesus. Andrew gets out of the way.

In developing a spirituality of mission, a person must first recognize who is proclaimed, namely, Jesus, the Messiah, the Anointed. A person does not proclaim himself or herself. John the Baptist does not declare himself as anything. Andrew does not declare himself as anything. Both of them point toward Jesus. He is the focus of a spirituality of mission.

Any follower of the Lamb of God uses John the Baptist and Andrew as models. Disciples do not proclaim themselves. Christians should never be found trying to get noticed. They are not basketball hotshots dunking the ball and hanging on the rim with the hope of being offered a bigger salary. They are not students who refuse to share information in the hope of beating others to the scholarship. They are not artists, musicians, vocalists who try to get to the front of the herd in order to be noticed, hired, and make lots of money in concerts. In fact, Christians know they are of no importance; they call others in the same way John the Baptist called Andrew, in the same way Andrew called Simon, by declaring the presence of the Lamb of God, the Messiah, the Anointed, Jesus Christ.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: When have you recently pointed out Jesus to another person without calling attention to yourself?

PRAYER: Lord God, you filled your prophet, John the Baptist, with the courage to announce the presence of your Son, the Lamb of God, to his own disciples. Carefully form the words in my mouth so that I may announce to those around me the name of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Finding Another

Pentecost Sunday

SCRIPTURE: "Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see' " (John 1:43-46).

REFLECTION: John the Baptist is the model of pointing out Jesus to others. Philip is the model of finding another and bringing him or her to Jesus. It is important to notice the pattern: Jesus finds Philip, who finds Nathanael. Once Philip has found Nathanael and invited him to come and see Jesus, Philip gets out of the way of the relationship between Jesus and Nathanael.

There are lots of lost people who need to be found. Almost everyone knows of someone who has gotten lost in drugs in an attempt to kill the pain of emotional hurt, death of a loved one, or failure of some kind. People get lost in alcohol, drinking in order to escape from dealing with the issues of life. An abusive relationship between spouses or friends is a sign that either one is lost or both of the parties are lost. People get lost in sex, in religion, in politics, and so on. All those lost need to be found by those who practice a spirituality of mission. A spirituality of mission dictates that one goes to find the lost by bringing Jesus to them.

This is the good news that Philip brings to Nathanael. He has found the one Moses wrote about, a reference to the book of Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, when Moses told the people, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. . . . [The LORD said to Moses,] 'I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command.' " For Philip, Jesus is that prophet, whom he announces to Nathanael after he finds him.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: Who has found you? Whom have you found?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus Christ, you went to Galilee to find your apostle Philip, who in turn found your apostle Nathanael. Make of me a faithful follower, one who finds others and invites them to come and see you, who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

God's Choice

Monday after Pentecost

SCRIPTURE: "Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you [Corinthians] were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor 1:26-30).

REFLECTION: In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul tells the Corinthians that they would not have called fellow Corinthians, but God chose to call them. They were not wise, nor powerful, nor of noble birth. In fact God chooses those whom the world considers foolish—the uneducated, the nonreflective, the ignorant—to shame those who consider themselves wise—the well educated, the silently reflective, and the knowledgeable. God chooses what is weak—the meek, the humble—to shame the strong—the haughty, the arrogant. God also chooses what is low and despised in the world—the homeless, the jobless, the immigrant—to reduce to nothing things that are praised—the mansion owner, the CEO, the citizen. In other words, God does not see things the way people see things.

What the educated consider important information, God desires wisdom or inner truth that transcends the ages. What

the self-righteous understand as earning salvation, God understands as his work of restoring people's relationship with himself through Jesus. What people understand as becoming holy, God knows that he is the source of all sanctification. And what people declare to be salvation, God knows that he bought back people with the blood of his Son.

Thus, no one can boast. No one can boast because everyone is God's choice. How important is it to remember this in a spirituality of mission? It is of the utmost of importance. People do not call themselves; they are called by God. People do not plan what they think needs to be done; they ask God to guide them to know what needs to be done. Paul asks the Corinthians to consider their call, and, in so doing, he also asks today's reader to consider his or her call. It is pure arrogance to declare that one decided to follow Christ. No one decides to follow Christ unless God calls him or her. When one person calls another, the person called must recognize that the caller is merely a vehicle for God's word to get through to human ears.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: Considering your call, are you wise, powerful, or of noble birth by human standards? Or are you foolish, weak, and low?

PRAYER: O God, you are the source of life in Christ Jesus, who became for all your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Thank you for calling me to be a foolish, weak, and lowly disciple of your Son. Grant that I may always boast of what you have done in me through the Holy Spirit. All praise to you, Most Holy Trinity, forever and ever. Amen.

God Speaks

Tuesday after Pentecost

SCRIPTURE: "Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs" (Heb 1:1-4).

REFLECTION: According to the anonymous author of Hebrews, God has been speaking even before there was anyone to hear his words! The author proceeds to outline a history of God's words when, finally, there were people to hear them. Beginning with the prophets, he explains that they were vehicles for God to speak to the ancestors in various ways, such as oral delivery, written delivery, and enacted delivery. In "these last days" of the intended audience, the author declares that God has spoken through a Son, a human being like all other human beings.

However, this Son possesses certain characteristics that distinguish him from all others. First, God appointed him heir of all things; that means that he will inherit all that is. Second, through him God created the worlds; that means that he is the instrument for everything that exists. Third, he is the reflection of God's glory; that means that if the Son looks into a mirror, he does not see himself, but God. Fourth, he is the

exact imprint of God's very being; that means that he is an image of what God is in himself, namely, pure being, pure essence, pure existence. Fifth, the Son sustains all things by his powerful word; that means that God's words are his words. Nothing exists that has not been spoken by God through his Son. Sixth, the Son wiped away everything that keeps humans from a relationship with God. And seventh, he sits at God's right hand in the world above.

When one person calls another out of a spirituality of mission, those words come from God through the Son. A person must realize who it is who speaks to him or her, and who it is who calls him or her. In the past God spoke through the prophets to the ancestors in Aramaic and Hebrew. In the days of Jesus, he spoke through Greek, then Latin, then many different languages. In these final days, he speaks in every language on every continent. A person who has developed a spirituality of mission knows that it is not he or she who calls others; it is God calling others through him or her.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: When has God spoken to others through your words?

PRAYER: Long ago, O God, you spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets. Two thousand years ago you spoke to us by a Son, Jesus Christ, whom you appointed heir of all things, through whom you also created the worlds. As the reflection of your glory and the exact imprint of your very being, he sustains all things by his powerful word. Grant that I may be a worthy instrument of your words today and come to worship your Majesty on high, where you live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Confirmed Call

Wednesday after Pentecost

SCRIPTURE: "[God's] divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature. . . . Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble. For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you" (2 Pet 1:3-4, 10-11).

REFLECTION: The Second Letter of Peter is best described as an essay or literary letter focused on precious faith as a gift from God. Faith, trust, enables the believer to navigate through this world to the world beyond death. The author identifies two blessings for which his readers should praise God in this life. The first blessing is God's gift of everything that is needed for life and godliness. This blessing has been bestowed through knowing about Jesus' glory and goodness. The second blessing is God's precious and very great promises. This blessing enables the believer one day to escape the sin of this world and enter into eternal life in the world to come.

Every day the believer confirms his or her call and election by continuing the process of faith. The call is confirmed through the Scriptures that often, like a bullet, hits the reader

between the eyes and challenges him or her to further growth. One's call is confirmed through the words of another, no matter if they are written, emailed, or spoken. A serendipitous event that welds together several things for a new insight can confirm one's call. It is God who calls people out of human corruption to participate in the divine nature.

The goal of a spirituality of mission is always the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ. Spirituality dictates the ways of getting there. Mission is the movement toward there. That is why a spirituality of mission involves finding others and sharing the good news of the blessings God has given for life and godliness along with his precious and great promises. If such faith is supported "with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love" (2 Pet 1:5-7), believers will be effective and fruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and they will have their call confirmed to the heavenly kingdom.

JOURNAL/MEDITATION: How have you had your call confirmed?

PRAYER: Almighty God, you have given everything needed for life and godliness through your Son, and promised participation in your own divine nature to those who confirm your call through their holy way of life. Grant that I may one day enter the eternal kingdom of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Appendix

Synthesis

The following questions are designed to be used at the end of each chapter (the question number corresponds to the chapter) in order for the reader to synthesize the five exercises presented in each chapter. It is best to record the synthesis in a journal. One's answers to the following questions will lead the reader to his or her spirituality of mission.

1. What call from God have you experienced?
2. What did you hear God calling you to be? To do? How was your faith involved in what you heard?
3. What/whom were you asked to leave behind?
4. What was your commission?
5. To where were you sent? To whom were you sent?
6. What worries did you have that were left behind?
7. What is your purpose in life?
8. What type of harvest have you gathered?
9. In what specific ways do you fearlessly evangelize?
10. How do you bear witness to the message and life of Jesus?
11. What has discipleship cost you?
12. Whom have you called to join the mission of spreading the good news?

Book synthesis (complete the following): My spirituality of mission is . . . .